

STATUS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS PLAN FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS  
AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

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HEARING

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON  
GOVERNMENT REFORM

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED SIXTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

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APRIL 30, 1999

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## STATUS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS PLAN FOR CAPITAL IM- PROVEMENTS AND ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

FRIDAY, APRIL 30, 1999

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA,  
COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM,  
*Washington, DC.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10 a.m., in room 2154, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Thomas M. Davis (chairman of the subcommittee) presiding.

Present: Representatives Davis, Horn and Norton.

Also present: Representative Biggert.

Staff present: Howard Denis, staff director/counsel; Anne Mack Barnes, Bob Dix, and Melissa Wojciak, professional staff members; Trey Hardin, communications and policy director; Jon Bouker, minority counsel; and Jean Gosa, minority staff assistant.

Mr. DAVIS. Good morning and welcome. We are here today to review many of the issues and challenges which confront the District of Columbia public school system. I am as always indebted to the ranking member of the subcommittee, Eleanor Holmes Norton, for working with me in a bipartisan manner, and I'm happy to have Mr. Horn from California, whose family has been in Washington, DC, for many generations, with us as well.

We are looking to the future.

Mrs. Biggert has just come in, too, from Illinois. Thank you for coming as well.

We are looking to the future. Last year the subcommittee conducted four hearings on the D.C. schools. Today we will examine the status of a number of the reform efforts. We seek an environment in which students can learn without fear for their personal safety, an environment that invites stakeholders to share in the effort to develop creative solutions. We seek an environment that is not driven by crisis.

I do not minimize the magnitude of the challenges that remain in restoring full confidence in the public school system. We have to work together to ensure that successful academic achievement and social development is the hallmark of the system's reputation. In fairness, it should be acknowledged that meaningful progress is being achieved. I want to thank our witnesses today and all of those who have played a role in that effort.

This subcommittee continues to be very active aggressively pursuing public policy developments and oversight review intended to

facilitate the successful revitalization of the District of Columbia. The current reform effort underway in the District's public schools is a very significant element in the overall revitalization.

Recent events, including the decision of the bond houses in New York to upgrade the District's debt rating, is evidence that overall efforts in the city across a wide front are producing results.

The leadership and vision being provided by Superintendent Arlene Ackerman and her team at the DCPS, along with the support and the direction provided by the Board of Education, the Emergency Board of Trustees, the Control Board, Mayor Williams and the City Council, provide the foundation for future successes; additionally, the support of parents, community leaders, the private sector, teachers, administrators, and support staff demonstrating our joint commitment to academic excellence.

The District of Columbia College Access Act, which I introduced, and which the subcommittee approved unanimously 2 weeks ago, will result in expanded opportunities for high school graduates for affordable college educations. We are deeply grateful to all of our colleagues for their recognition of the enormous value of H.R. 974 and the benefits of expanding choices and access to higher education that the bill will bring about.

We have to provide opportunities to achieve academic excellence in facilities that are safe, have efficient heating and air conditioning, whose roofs don't leak, and can be modernized. We have to be able to include advances in technology, fiber optic cable, arts and sciences laboratories and special programming activities. This must be a priority.

Another priority mission is to develop, update, and implement an academic plan which meets the needs of the school population and prepares students to compete in a global economy.

I thank our distinguished panel for demonstrating the leadership and commitment to the District's children. I look forward to their testimony and the opportunity to pursue a number of questions.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Thomas M. Davis follows:]

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Representative Tom Davis  
 Chairman, D. C. Subcommittee  
 April 30, 1999

Opening Statement - District of Columbia Public Schools

Good morning and welcome. We are here to review many of the issues and challenges which confront the District of Columbia public schools. I am as always indebted to the Ranking Member of the Subcommittee, Eleanor Holmes Norton, for working with me in a bi-partisan manner.

We are looking to the future. Last year the Subcommittee conducted 4 hearings on D.C. schools. Today we will examine the status of a number of reform efforts. We seek an environment in which students can learn without fear for their personal safety, an environment that invites stakeholders to share in the effort to develop creative solutions. We seek an environment that is not driven by crisis.

I do not minimize the magnitude of the challenge that remains in restoring full public confidence in this school system. We must work together to insure that successful academic achievement and social development is the hallmark of the system's reputation. In fairness it should be acknowledged that meaningful progress is being achieved. I want to thank our witnesses today and all those who have played a role in that effort.

This Subcommittee continues to be very active, aggressively pursuing public policy development and oversight review intended to facilitate the successful revitalization of the District of Columbia. The current reform effort underway in the District's public schools is a significant element of overall revitalization.

Recent events, including the decision of the bond houses in New York to upgrade the

District's debt rating, is evidence that overall efforts in the city across a wide front are producing results.

The leadership and vision being provided by Superintendent Arlene Ackerman and her team at DCPS, along with the support and direction provided by the Board of Education, the Emergency Board of Trustees, the Control Board, Mayor Williams, and The City Council, provides the foundation for future success. Additionally, the support of parents, community leaders, the private sector, teachers, administrators, and support staff, is demonstrating our joint commitment to academic excellence.

The District of Columbia College Access Act which I have introduced and which the Subcommittee approved 2 weeks ago, will result in expanded opportunities for high school graduates. I am deeply grateful to all of my colleagues for their recognition of the enormous value of H.R. 974 and the benefit of expanded choices and access to higher education that the bill will bring about.

We must provide opportunities to achieve academic excellence in facilities that are safe; that have efficient heating and air conditioning; whose roofs don't leak; and that can be modernized. We must be able to include advances in technology, fiber optic cable, arts and science laboratories, and special programming activities. This must be a priority.

Another priority mission is to develop, update, and implement an academic plan which meets the needs of the school population and prepares students to compete in a global economy.

I thank our distinguished Panel for demonstrating leadership and commitment to the District's children. I look forward to their testimony and the opportunity to pursue a number of questions.



Mr. DAVIS. I would now yield to Delegate Norton for an opening statement.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Before I begin my opening statement, I would just like to commend the D.C. Public Schools on the way in which they have responded to the aftermath of the great tragedy at Columbine High School in Littleton, CO. While, like many school systems across the United States, there had to be some evacuations, you had to close schools, it's over with and done with, and it's settled down.

These children may regard this matter as pranks. I would hope that if we do find that children have engaged in these threats, that strong sanctions would be taken against them so that an example could be made so that children would, in fact, get the point that these are not pranks and are not considered pranks. If, in fact, adults or children close to adults are found to be responsible, I would hope that some prosecution would occur so that we could have a deterrent effect upon such copycat incidents.

Today's hearing reflects the continuing interest of the chairman, the subcommittee, and the Congress in improvements in the D.C. Public Schools. Of the problems that have arisen in home rule governance, none has had a more serious impact than those that relate to education and children. The District's problems in its public schools are typical of big cities. However, the paralysis and stalemate that developed between the Board of Education and former Superintendent Franklin Smith left the schools to drift downward and finally hit bottom and contributed to the loss of the board's power and standing in the community. A commendable and structured effort to regain both is under way.

The decline in the D.C. Public Schools has been so wholesale that the initial reforms related simply to keeping them standing. Much of what has occupied the appointed Board of Trustees, the superintendent, and the Council has related not to academic improvements, but to support issues, such as security, fixing roofs, getting a correct count of children in the schools, and assuring edible food in school cafeterias. The primacy of these issues in the first stage of reform was demonstrated by the appointment of a former general as superintendent, Julius Becton. To General Becton's credit, he also brought in an educational expert, Arlene Ackerman, who has since become superintendent.

Although Mrs. Ackerman became superintendent more quickly than anyone had anticipated after the unexpected resignation of General Becton, she quickly won the confidence of many in the city and the Congress. This confidence came largely because she broke through the academic stalemate and quickly began to make major changes unlike any that had been seen in many years. One common example was a turnaround in test scores in virtually every grade. Another was the Summer STARS program and an after-school program during the school year, one of the first of its kind in the country, to tackle social promotion by reducing class size and giving children the hands-on academic help they need.

The Clinton administration has been so impressed with these and similar innovations that the President, the First Lady, and the Secretary of Education have sent millions of dollars to the city for the educational reforms designed by Superintendent Ackerman, in-

cluding \$5 million for the Summer STARS program. Secretary Richard Riley, who spoke at my Education town meeting this past Monday, announced there another \$5 million grant for the District of Columbia Youth Investment Program for the superintendent's after-school programs.

Large problems continue to plague the D.C. Public Schools and the superintendent, the trustees, and the Board of Education are under great pressure to proceed more rapidly to attend to them. Among the most serious are continuing problems with special education where the children most in need simply cannot afford to wait any longer. The difference between today and recent years, however, is that the superintendent has not hesitated to act boldly whatever the consequences to existing management and has not had interference from others that sometimes made it difficult to take bold action in the past.

As the Control Board proceeds toward restoration of the home rule powers of the school board, District officials must look at what home rule governance and structure best suits our school system today. Many cities are moving away from politically based school boards toward structures that assure parent participation and guarantee that the children will be the overriding concern. I have not examined what the available options are. I can only hope that some in the city with direct responsibilities are doing so. I have formed no opinion yet, nor, I believe, have most residents. Most would agree, however, that what we had surely did not work, and indeed fell apart. What we had may well be quite capable of working, but the burden will be on the present system to demonstrate that it can work for children.

One thing seems clear. There has been a change in the political culture in the District. It did not come from Congress. It did not come from the Control Board. It came directly from the streets and the people. Residents will no longer tolerate factionalism on the board, interference with the superintendent who wants to move forward, poor performance by our children, or unaccountable personnel. The District does not need overseers to make the schools work. Residents know what to do. They simply won't take it anymore.

I'm very pleased to welcome today's witnesses, Mayor Anthony Williams, Council Member Kevin Chavous, chair of the Council's education committee; Wilma Harvey, president of D.C. Board of Education; Constance Newman, vice chair of the Control Board; Maudine Cooper, chair of the Emergency Board of Trustees; and Superintendent Arlene Ackerman. I commend each and every one of them for the admirable leadership they are providing in the effort to reform and refurbish our public schools and to assure families and residents a school system of which we can all be proud.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman for this hearing and for your efforts on behalf of our schools.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Hon. Eleanor Holmes Norton follows:]

ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

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**STATEMENT OF CONGRESSWOMAN ELEANOR HOLMES NORTON  
OVERSIGHT HEARING ON THE STATUS OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS PLAN FOR CAPITAL IMPROVEMENTS AND ACADEMIC  
EXCELLENCE**

**April 30, 1999**

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the Summer STARS Program. Secretary Richard Riley, who spoke at my Education Town Meeting this past Monday, announced there another \$5 million grant for the District of Columbia Youth Investment Program for the superintendent's after-school programs.

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Mr. DAVIS. Mrs. Biggert.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you very much for allowing me to participate in your hearing today. I am on the Government Reform Committee, but not on the District of Columbia Subcommittee, but public education is of great importance to me, and public education in large cities. While in the Illinois Legislature, I worked on the Chicago school reform. I'm proud to say that it proved to be a great success. So I look forward to hearing about the reform in the District today, and I'm happy to be here. Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

Any other statements? If not, I would like to call our panel of witnesses to testify. Mayor Anthony Williams; Councilman Kevin Chavous, the chairman of the education committee; Connie Newman, the vice chair of the Control Board; Arlene Ackerman, the superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools; Wilma Harvey, the president of the D.C. Board of Education; and Maudine Cooper, the chair of the Emergency Board of Trustees.

As you know, it's the policy of the committee—is Mr. Chavous here yet? Councilman Chavous is not here yet, but we will swear him in when he gets here. It is the policy of the committee that all witnesses be sworn before they can testify. If you would rise with me and raise your right hands.

[Witnesses sworn.]

Mr. DAVIS. Mayor Williams, I understand that you have some pressing budgetary meetings coming up, and so I will start with you. If you have to excuse yourself before the questions, we certainly understand, and we just look forward to a very continued cooperative working relationship with you. Thank you for being here.

**STATEMENTS OF ANTHONY WILLIAMS, MAYOR, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA; KEVIN CHAVOUS, CHAIRMAN, EDUCATION COMMITTEE, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL; CONSTANCE NEWMAN, VICE-CHAIRMAN, D.C. CONTROL BOARD; ARLENE ACKERMAN, SUPERINTENDENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS; WILMA HARVEY, PRESIDENT, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS BOARD OF EDUCATION; AND MAUDINE COOPER, CHAIRMAN, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS EMERGENCY TRANSITIONAL EDUCATION BOARD OF TRUSTEES**

Mayor WILLIAMS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was just at a meeting actually with some of the county executives, and we were talking about contingency plans for the Wilson Bridge. I'm sure you and the committee would appreciate that.

I want to thank you and Congresswoman Norton, Congressman Horn, all of the members of the committee for having us here today for the opportunity to testify. I'm pleased to join this panel to discuss our shared vision for education, to elaborate on the questions of governance and the operations of the school system.

This is a time for optimism in the District. Our bond rating is up, our books are balanced, and our economy is still expanding. But a rising economic tide does not ensure the success of our education system. Our school system needs to experience a similar

turnaround. I'm committed to working with the superintendent and the other leaders of our city to make sure that this happens.

My vision for education has three central components. First, our children deserve the best possible schools with first-class teachers. Second, our approach to education must recognize that an equal part of a child's learning and development takes place outside the classroom. This is exemplified by my belief in the idea of parents as first teachers. Third, we must mobilize all of the resources of the community toward the education of our young people. That means involving parents, teachers, civic leaders, faith organizations, as well as the business community in the life of every child.

Let me discuss each of these in turn and highlight a few of the initiatives. As I mentioned, our first and most immediate priority is to make sure that our children have the best schools with the best teachers in the region. Our students deserve to learn under a roof that doesn't leak. They deserve schools where bathrooms work and classrooms stay warm in the winter and cool during summer. That's why I have proposed investing \$364 million in renovation, modernization, and construction of public schools. Among other things, these funds will pay for two new schools and will allow us to renovate eight schools a year for the next 6 years. The funds will bring our education system into the 21st century providing access to modern technology and computers.

Competition can and should drive this effort to make our schools the best they can be. I believe that parents should have a choice among public schools and charter schools so that they can hold schools accountable for the education their children receive.

I also believe our children deserve the best teachers in the region. District teaching salaries are well below those in Maryland and Virginia. With close to 70 percent of our teachers approaching retirement age in the years ahead, we face a critical window in teacher hiring. To help our city compete for and retain the best and brightest new educators, I have proposed a 4 to 5 percent raise for teachers, 4.5 percent in 1999 and 5 percent in the year 2000.

The second part of my vision is the idea that educating a child does not begin and end with the school bell. It begins before birth and continues through the early years and into high school and college. Educating a child means making a commitment before school, after school, and in that general environment.

Early childhood programs for children are essential for making a child enter school ready to learn. Part of the \$33 million Children and Youth Investment Partnership could be used to expand access to these services for at-risk families. These programs have been proven to improve school performance, reduce instances of child abuse, as well as save as much as \$7 for every dollar invested.

But quality early childhood and preschool programs are not enough. Young people must also have access to worthwhile, wholesome activities during the afternoon hours. We know that, for example, juvenile crime suddenly triples in the hour after the school bell rings, yet as many as 45,000 District students go without after-school programs. My proposal for this partnership could change that equation, providing students with these opportunities.

The third major component of my education vision is recognizing that the entire community has a role to play in the life of every

child. Parents, teachers, and businesses must be engaged together in the process of education.

I believe we must support parents in their role as first teachers. We must encourage and support parents to get involved in their child's education. Every parent should have access to quality affordable day care, counseling, and other services designed to help raise that child.

I am also asking the business community to play a role in the education of the District. This is happening on a number of fronts. For one, we have worked in partnership with 15 companies and foundations to establish the D.C. College Access Program. It is a creative partnership that will awaken students to the opportunities available for higher education and make those opportunities possible by providing scholarships to make college affordable. In addition to college scholarships, the program will provide as many as 11,000 students with college advisors in their high schools to help them navigate the complex testing, application, and financial aid process.

Members of the business community can serve as mentors for young people or get involved in a summer jobs program, which I propose extending into a year-round program. It would be coupled with a new youth internship program as well as a youth-to-careers and entrepreneurship program to engage high school dropouts in nontraditional education and vocational testing.

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee, I thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today and look forward to answering your questions.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mayor Williams follows:]



ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS  
MAYOR

**TESTIMONY OF THE HONORABLE ANTHONY A. WILLIAMS**  
**SUBCOMMITTEE ON THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA**  
**COMMITTEE ON GOVERNMENT REFORM**  
APRIL 30, 1999

Chairman Davis, Congresswoman Norton, and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify before you today. I am pleased to join this distinguished panel to discuss our shared vision for education, and to elaborate on the questions of governance and operations of the school system.

This is a time for optimism in the District. Our bond rating is up, our books are balanced, and our economy is still expanding. But a rising economic tide does not ensure the success of our education system. Our school system needs to experience a similar turnaround. I am committed to working with the Superintendent and the other leaders of our city to make sure that happens.

My vision for education has three central components:

First, our children deserve the best possible schools with first-class teachers.

Second, our approach to education must recognize that an equal part of a child's learning and development takes place outside the classroom. This is exemplified by my belief in the idea of parents as first teachers.

Third, we must mobilize all the resources of the community toward the education of our young people. That means involving parents, teachers, civic leaders, faith organizations, as well as the business community in the life of every child.

Let me discuss each of these in turn, and highlight a few of the initiatives my administration has put forward to translate this vision into reality.

As I mentioned, our first and most immediate priority is to make sure our children have the best schools with the best teachers in the region. Our students deserve to learn under a roof that doesn't leak. They deserve schools where bathrooms work and classrooms stay warm in the winter and cool during summer school.



That is why I have proposed investing \$364 million in renovation, modernization, and construction of public schools. Among other things, these funds will pay for two new schools and will allow us to renovate 8 schools a year for the next 6 years. The funds will bring our education system into the 21<sup>st</sup> century, providing access to modern technology and computers.

Competition can and should drive this effort to make our schools the best they can be. I believe parents should have a choice among public schools and charter schools so that they can hold schools accountable for the education their child receives.

I also believe our children deserve the best teachers in the region. District teaching salaries are well below those in Maryland and Virginia. With close to 70 percent of our teachers approaching retirement age in the years ahead, we face a critical window in teacher hiring. To help our city compete for and retain the best and brightest new educators, I have proposed a 4 to 5 percent raise for teachers.

The second part of my vision is the idea that educating a child does not begin and end with the school bell; it begins before birth and continues through the early years and on into high school and college. Educating a child means making a commitment before school, after school, and providing the promise of a better future.

Early childhood programs for children are essential to making sure a child enters school ready to learn. Part of the \$33 million Children and Youth Investment Partnership could be used to expand access to these services for at-risk families. These programs have been proven to improve school performance, reduce instances of child abuse, as well as save as much as 7 dollars for every dollar invested.

But quality early childhood and pre-school programs aren't enough. Young people must also have access to worthwhile, wholesome activities during the afternoon hours.

We know that juvenile crime suddenly triples in the hour after the school bell rings, yet as many as 45,000 District students go without after school programs. My proposal for a Children and Youth Investment Partnership could change that equation, providing students with opportunities for hours of academic enrichment, wholesome fun and community service. These programs are proven to reduce juvenile crime, drug use, and teen pregnancy.

Our children must know that studying hard will pay off. We need to make the promise of higher education a reality for every student. That means enacting the legislation that would give District students in-state tuition rates at public universities in other states. It also means making a new investment in UDC to build the school into a first class institution of higher learning.

3

The third major component of my education vision is recognizing that the entire community has a role to play in the life of every child. Parents, teachers, and businesses must be engaged together in the process of education.

I believe we must support parents in their role as first teachers. We must support and encourage parents to get involved in their child's education. Every parent should have access to quality, affordable day care, counseling and other services designed to help them raise educated children.

I am also asking the business community to play a role in education in the District. This is happening on several fronts.

We have worked in partnership with 15 companies and foundations to establish the D.C. College Access Program. It is a creative partnership that will awaken students to the opportunities available for higher education and make those opportunities possible by providing scholarships to make college affordable. In addition to college scholarships, the program will provide as many as 11,000 students with college advisers in their high schools to help them navigate the complex testing, application and financial aid process.

We have also begun working with our partners in the private sector to create a technology high school. Working hand in hand with some of the technology firms in the region, we can create unique learning opportunities for students, and help them find economic empowerment.

Members of the business community can serve as mentors for young people, or get involved in the Summer Jobs program, which I have proposed extending into a year-round program. It would be coupled with a new youth internship program as well as a new a Youth-to-Careers and Entrepreneurship program to engage high school dropouts in non-traditional educational and vocational training.

Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, thank you for your time. I look forward to continuing to work with you, and to answering any questions you may have.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Chavous, if you would rise, I have to swear you in. Can you stand up?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Yes.

Mr. DAVIS. Happy to have you here.

[Witness sworn.]

Mr. DAVIS. Councilman Chavous, if you would care to make any opening remarks, we have copies of everything that has been submitted. You don't need to take the full 5 minutes.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and members of the committee, including our Delegate and our Congresswoman. It's good to see you all.

Sorry I was a few minutes late. I am a member of the finance committee on the Council, and this morning we voted out of committee the most sweeping tax package this city has ever seen. I'm proud to report that this morning.

I am Kevin Chavous, a member of the Council of the District of Columbia representing ward 7. As you know, I'm speaking in my capacity this morning as chair of the committee on education, libraries and recreation. I welcome this opportunity to report to you on the role that the Council has played and will continue to play in the ongoing reform effort taking place in our public school system.

You do have my prepared remarks and I just want to highlight a couple of things that indicate the involvement of the Council in this effort.

The committee on education over the past few months has had an unprecedented number of hearings involving the District of Columbia Public Schools and the charter schools over the past few months. Topics have included areas such as school bus transportation, certification of bus drivers, as well as various other special education issues; student truancy and dropout prevention policies and programs; the public charter schools and their role in this community; long-range facilities master plan; and the interagency collaboration effort where we have asked various agencies that touch children to come together on ways to work better together.

This month the Council did something that will move this system forward in the area of special education. Working with the superintendent, we approved at the request of my committee, the establishment of a special Council committee to investigate the excessive spending, poor accountability, and ineffective, low-quality offerings in the special education programs. Clearly, problems were manifested long before our current superintendent came to this city, but it is the goal of this committee, of the Council committee on education, to assist her in offering a quality education for our special education students that number approximately 8,000 children.

In addition, less than a year ago the full Council voted and passed the uniform per pupil student funding formula which was later approved by Congress. This law is noteworthy because it allows the funds that we allocate for education to follow the student. It also provides a sound basis for the fiscal budget to be established with respect to how we spend our money. The public charter schools is implementing this formula this school year, and DCPS, our public school system, will begin similar implementation in school year 1999 and 2000.

We have, my office, maintained almost daily contact with Mrs. Ackerman and members of her staff as well as members of the public charter school community. We intend to be of assistance to both entities as well as to provide oversight, and to do so we need to be informed to understand the issues and be able to answer the questions of our constituents. The strength of this communication will support our efforts in rebuilding a budget consensus process and make sure that the 2000 budget reflects the priorities of our citizens. The good news is that all of the committee and budget working group recommendations, if they are all accepted, Mrs. Ackerman will get close to what she wants for 1999 and 2000. The Mayor has made that commitment, and I do as well.

I want to highlight a couple of other Council actions before I close that impact on school reform. In the budget that we passed out of committee just a couple of weeks ago, we requested the DCPS study the feasibility and the requirements for establishing a residential school for school year 2000 and 2001. I might parenthetically add that we have seen with the SEA foundation, a residential school that is a public charter school, that there is a greater need for a holistic approach for the education of our children. Because of some of the dysfunctional homes that a lot of our children come from, we feel, the Council feels strongly that the city should make an investment in a residential school.

In addition, we have requested in our committee report that DCPS establish a comprehensive student truancy and dropout prevention program for school year 1999 and 2000. I can tell you that far too many of our children are on the street or visiting local businesses during school hours. Working with the Mayor, Chief Ramsey, and Superintendent Ackerman, this year we sent thousands of letters to businesses urging them to report children who come into their establishments during the school day to the local school.

As a strong supporter of before- and after-school programs, my colleagues in the Council and I have requested that DCPS apply for the 72 Federal grants for which they qualify. According to reports, only 47 of those grants were applied for last year. We feel that if we can maximize the funds that are available through Federal grants, it would enhance some of the efforts that Mrs. Ackerman has been under taking with respect to school reform.

With respect to school safety, we voted out of committee just recently to transfer the responsibility of school security from DCPS to the Metropolitan Police Department. Sadly, it was on the same morning of the Littleton, CO, incident. It is my belief that Mrs. Ackerman, working with the chief of police, can put in place a sound approach to school security that reflects the public safety needs both inside and outside of the school.

Another project in progress is the State Education Agency. It is my belief that the District of Columbia has numerous State education responsibilities, and there is no single agency that handles this task. Therefore, we have State education agency functions that are located in a number of different agencies without the benefit of the collaboration and comprehensive planning that should take place. Our committee has suggested and we will be proposing legislation that would blend those responsibilities into one single entity.

With respect to the public charter schools, we do feel that the public charter school experiment is working in the District. We support public charter schools. We do need to address some of the inherent inconsistencies in some of their funding, particularly as it relates to facilities. We have a lot of good charter school programs that have been proposed, but one of the big barriers is in the area of facilities and where they are going to house their efforts. So we are working with Connie Newman on the Control Board and Mrs. Ackerman to find a way to make excess D.C. school surplus property more available to charter schools.

With respect to new school construction, I am very pleased to report that the Mayor has worked with us in putting in place a new school construction plan that is noteworthy here in the District. We are the only jurisdiction in America that hasn't built a new school in the last 20 years, but over the next 10 years, we will either build from the ground up 8 to 10 new schools or totally modernize them.

Finally, let me just say that President Clinton has proposed \$114 million for a special subsidized bonding authority for DCPS school construction and repairs; however, to successfully implement and complete the plan, Federal funds are needed. I'm requesting the Congress to consider providing the \$73 million for fiscal year 2000 as has been outlined in the Mayor's fiscal year 2000 financial plan. That will make a big difference in aiding our effort toward new school construction.

In closing, for as much progress as the Council has made, there remains work to be done in support of public education reform. The Authority, Mayor, Council, and superintendent are committed to working together in support of public education.

I do want to say that we have a jewel in Mrs. Arlene Ackerman. She should be commended for her effort and perseverance in accepting the many challenges to the reform of our school system. While she has a lot of challenges, we must understand and appreciate that the problems she has been tasked to fix weren't new—they were here before she got here. She didn't cause them. But I think that she has done a fabulous job, and we are committed to working with her to make that a reality.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your support, and I look forward to working with you in the future and to entertain any questions you may have.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Chavous follows:]

**Testimony of**

**Kevin P. Chavous**

**Chair, Committee on Education**

**Council of the District of Columbia**

**Ward 7 Member**

**before the**

**Subcommittee on the District of Columbia, Committee on**

**Government Reform of the House of Representatives**

**April 30, 1999**

GOOD MORNING CHAIRMAN DAVIS AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE. I AM KEVIN P. CHAVOUS, A MEMBER OF THE COUNCIL OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA REPRESENTING WARD 7. TODAY, I AM SPEAKING IN MY CAPACITY AS CHAIR OF THE COUNCIL'S COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION, LIBRARIES AND RECREATION. I WELCOME THE OPPORTUNITY TO REPORT ON THE ROLE THAT THE COUNCIL HAS PLAYED AND WILL CONTINUE TO PLAY IN THE ON-GOING REFORM OF OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS. WE HAVE INSISTED UPON AND TAKEN AN ACTIVE PARTNERSHIP IN THAT REFORM. THIS HAS MEANT BALANCING OUR OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITIES WITH THE SUPERINTENDENT'S NEED TO CONTINUE THE REFORM OF THE SCHOOL SYSTEM.

- **PUBLIC HEARINGS:** THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION HAS HELD AN UNPRECEDENTED NUMBER OF HEARINGS INVOLVING THE DCPS AND PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS OVER THE LAST SIX MONTHS. TOPICS INCLUDED, SCHOOL BUS TRANSPORTATION AND CERTIFICATION OF SCHOOL BUS DRIVERS, AS WELL AS VARIOUS OTHER SPECIAL EDUCATION ISSUES, STUDENT TRUANCY AND DROP-OUT PREVENTION POLICIES AND PROGRAMS, PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS, LONG RANGE FACILITIES MASTER PLAN, INTER-AGENCY COLLABORATION AND SCHOOL-BASED MANAGEMENT. WE HAVE HELD THESE HEARINGS TO HELP DISTRICT PARENTS AND RESIDENTS, AS WELL AS THE COUNCIL, UNDERSTAND WHAT IS OCCURRING IN THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.
- **SPECIAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE:** THIS MONTH, THE COUNCIL APPROVED, AT THE REQUEST OF MY COMMITTEE, THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A "SPECIAL COUNCIL COMMITTEE" TO INVESTIGATE THE EXCESSIVE SPENDING, POOR ACCOUNTABILITY AND INEFFECTIVE, LOW QUALITY OFFERINGS IN THE DCPS'

SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS. DCPS SPENDS CLOSE TO A THIRD OF ITS BUDGET FOR SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAMS THAT SERVE APPROXIMATELY 8,000 STUDENTS. AT THE SAME TIME, MANY SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS GO UNSERVED. WE WILL TAKE AGGRESSIVE ACTIONS TO GET IMMEDIATE RELIEF FOR OUR SPECIAL NEEDS STUDENTS. ADDITIONALLY, I HAVE ESTABLISHED A SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT GROUP THAT MEETS MONTHLY TO DISCUSS ISSUES SURROUNDING SPECIAL EDUCATION. IF YOU REALLY WANT TO KNOW THE OTHER SIDE OF THE SPECIAL EDUCATION PROGRAM, TALK WITH AN ACTIVE SPECIAL EDUCATION PARENT.

- **UNIFORM PER PUPIL STUDENT FORMULA:** LESS THAN A YEAR AGO, THE FULL COUNCIL VOTED AND PASSED THE UNIFORM PER PUPIL STUDENT FORMULA ("FORMULA") WHICH WAS LATER APPROVED BY CONGRESS. THE LAW HAS ALLOWED FOR THE FUNDS TO FOLLOW THE STUDENT. IT ALSO PROVIDES A BASIS FOR THE FISCAL BUDGET TO BE ESTABLISHED. THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS IS IMPLEMENTING THE FORMULA THIS SCHOOL YEAR AND THE DCPS WILL BEGIN IMPLEMENTATION IN SY 1999-2000.
- **COMMUNICATION:** MY OFFICE MAINTAINS ALMOST DAILY CONTACT WITH MS. ACKERMAN AND WITH MEMBERS OF THE PUBIC CHARTER SCHOOL COMMUNITY. THIS MAY BE MORE CONTACT THAN MS. ACKERMAN OR HER STAFF WOULD LIKE. HOWEVER, WE INTEND TO BE OF ASSISTANCE, AS WELL AS PROVIDE OVERSIGHT, AND TO DO SO, WE NEED TO BE INFORMED, TO UNDERSTAND THE ISSUES AND TO BE ABLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTIONS OF OUR CONSTITUENTS. THE STRENGTH OF THIS COMMUNICATION WILL SUPPORT OUR EFFORTS DURING THE BUDGETING PROCESS AS WE WORK IN



CONSENSUS FOR A SUCCESSFUL FY 2000 BUDGET. THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT, IF ALL COMMITTEE AND BUDGET WORKING GROUP RECOMMENDATIONS ARE ACCEPTED, AND MS. ACKERMAN CONTINUES TO MAKE HER CASE, DCPS WILL BE CLOSE TO RECEIVING ITS TOTAL BUDGET REQUEST.

**OTHER COUNCIL ACTIONS INCLUDE:**

- **RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL:** THE COUNCIL HAS REQUESTED THAT THE DCPS STUDY THE FEASIBILITY AND REQUIREMENTS FOR ESTABLISHING A DCPS RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL FOR SCHOOL YEAR 2000-2001. A QUICK VIEW OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM'S STUDENT POPULATION, REVEALS THAT THERE IS A NEED FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF AN EFFECTIVE RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL. IN MOST SCHOOL DISTRICTS, RESIDENTIAL SCHOOLS ARE SO POPULAR, THEY ARE UNABLE TO ACCOMMODATE THE APPLICANTS DUE TO LIMITED SPACE.
- **STUDENT TRUANT AND DROP-OUT PREVENTION PROGRAM:** THE COUNCIL HAS REQUESTED THAT THE DCPS ESTABLISH A COMPREHENSIVE STUDENT TRUANT AND DROP-OUT PREVENTION PROGRAM FOR SCHOOL YEAR 1999-2000. FAR TOO MANY OF OUR STUDENTS ARE ON THE STREET OR VISITING LOCAL BUSINESSES DURING SCHOOL HOURS. THIS MUST STOP---OUR CHILDREN MUST ATTEND SCHOOL AND BE ACCOUNTED FOR. FURTHER, THE MAYOR, SUPERINTENDENT, CHIEF OF POLICE AND THE COUNCIL WILL BE REMINDING BUSINESSES ABOUT THE TRUANCY LAW. I HAVE MET WITH CHIEF CHARLES RAMSEY AND URGED THE MPD TO ENFORCE THE TRUANCY LAW.
- **FEDERAL GRANTS:** AS A STRONG SUPPORTER OF BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS, MY COLLEAGUES ON THE COUNCIL AND I HAVE

REQUESTED THAT THE DCPS APPLY FOR THE 72 FEDERAL GRANTS FOR WHICH THEY QUALIFY. ACCORDING TO THE GAO REPORT, MOST OF THESE GRANTS ARE FOR BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS. ALSO, SUPERINTENDENT ARLENE ACKERMAN SHOULD BE CONGRATULATED FOR TAKING THE INITIATIVE TO SUCCESSFULLY APPLY FOR THE TWENTY-FIRST CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS GRANT. THIS GRANT WILL PROVIDE MUCH NEEDED BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL SERVICES TO STUDENTS IN TEN SCHOOLS.

ALTHOUGH MUCH HAS BEEN ACCOMPLISHED OVER THE PAST 6 MONTHS, THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION HAS A CONSIDERABLE WORKLOAD SCHEDULED TO INCLUDE:

- **SCHOOL SAFETY:** IRONICALLY, THE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION VOTED TO TRANSFER THE RESPONSIBILITY OF SCHOOL SECURITY FROM THE DCPS TO THE METROPOLITAN POLICE DEPARTMENT THE MORNING OF THE LITTLETON, COLORADO INCIDENT. I FIRMLY BELIEVE THAT CHILDREN AND STAFF DESERVE THE SAME LEVEL OF PROTECTION WHILE IN SCHOOL BUILDINGS, AND ON AND AROUND SCHOOL GROUNDS THAT IS PROVIDED TO THE NON-SCHOOL POPULATION. FURTHER, I BELIEVE THAT THE SUPERINTENDENT SHOULD NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR SUPPORT SERVICE PROGRAMS SO THAT SHE CAN FOCUS ON ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE. WE WILL BE WORKING WITH SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY LEADERS TO SUPPORT CHIEF RAMSEY'S SCHOOL SECURITY DESIGN FOR AN EFFECTIVE SECURITY PROGRAM. IN JUNE OF 1999, I WILL BE HOLDING A HEARING ON SCHOOL SECURITY.

- **STATE EDUCATION AGENCY (SEA):** ANOTHER PROJECT IN PROGRESS IS THE LEGISLATION FOR A STATE EDUCATION AGENCY. THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA HAS NUMEROUS STATE RESPONSIBILITIES, THERE IS NO SINGLE AGENCY THAT HANDLES THESE TASKS THEREFORE, SEA FUNCTIONS ARE LOCATED IN A NUMBER OF AGENCIES WITHOUT THE BENEFIT OF COLLABORATION AND COMPREHENSIVE PLANNING. THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SEA WILL NOT OVERLAP WITH THOSE OF OTHER AGENCIES. THE SEA SHOULD HAVE OVERSIGHT RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS, ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAMS, SPECIAL EDUCATION STATE FUNCTIONS, ETC. IN ADDITION, THE SEA WILL BE RESPONSIBLE FOR ENSURING THAT VALID STUDENT ENROLLMENT INFORMATION IS AVAILABLE TO ENABLE A FAIR BUDGETING PROCESS.
- **PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS:** SOME OF OUR PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS ARE UNIQUE AND OFFER CHALLENGING EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS. THERE IS STILL A NEED, HOWEVER, TO FURTHER ADDRESS FACILITIES REQUIREMENTS AND DETERMINE A MORE APPROPRIATE WAY TO ESTABLISH STUDENT ENROLLMENT COUNTS WHICH WILL HELP TO ESTABLISH MORE ACCURATE BUDGET PROJECTIONS. THE COUNCIL HAS BEEN VERY SUPPORTIVE OF THE PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL MOVEMENT.
- **NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION:** A PROGRAM THAT I HAVE ADVOCATED FOR YEARS IS NEW SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND COMPLETE RENOVATION OF SCHOOL FACILITIES, TO STATE-OF-THE-ART STANDARDS, IN ORDER TO MEET THE EDUCATIONAL NEEDS OF THE 21ST CENTURY.  
FOR SEVERAL YEARS, I HAVE ADVOCATED THAT THE DCPS UNDERTAKE NEW

CONSTRUCTION AND, WHERE APPROPRIATE, TOTALLY MODERNIZE OLDER FACILITIES. SCHOOL FACILITIES THAT LOOK GOOD, HAVE GOOD LIGHTING, AIR CONDITIONING, MODERN LABORATORIES AND PROPER SPACE FOR CLASSES, ENHANCE LEARNING. HOWEVER, MOST OF OUR SCHOOLS DO NOT MEET MINIMUM STANDARDS. OUR NEWEST SCHOOL WAS BUILT IN THE EARLY 1970'S. TODAY, THE DISTRICT DOES NOT HAVE A SINGLE STATE-OF-THE-ART SCHOOL.

CENTRAL TO THE DCPS' ABILITY TO MOVE FORWARD WITH NEW CONSTRUCTION AND MODERNIZATION, AND FOR THAT MATTER, FOR SYSTEMIC MAINTENANCE, IS THE LONG RANGE FACILITIES MASTER PLAN ("PLAN"). THE GOOD NEWS IS THAT THE DCPS IS WORKING WITH THE BOARD OF EDUCATION TO DO THE PLANNING AND TO HOLD THE REQUIRED HEARINGS TO PUT THIS PLAN IN PLACE BY OCTOBER. WITH THE TOTAL SUPPORT AND URGING OF THE COUNCIL, THE PLAN INCLUDES CONSTRUCTION OR MODERNIZATION OF NINE SCHOOLS IN FY 2000 AND THE SAME FOR ANOTHER 10 SCHOOLS EACH YEAR FOR THE NEXT DECADE. IF THE CONGRESS SUPPORTS THIS AGGRESSIVE PLAN, WE WILL MODERNIZED OR REBUILD 100 OR APPROXIMATELY 69% OF THE SCHOOL FACILITY INVENTORY.

PRESIDENT CLINTON HAS PROPOSED \$114 MILLION FOR SPECIAL SUBSIDIZED BONDING AUTHORITY FOR DCPS SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION AND REPAIRS. HOWEVER, TO SUCCESSFULLY IMPLEMENT AND COMPLETE THE PLAN, FEDERAL FUNDS ARE NEEDED. I AM ASKING THAT CONGRESS PROVIDE THE \$73 MILLION FOR FY 2000 AS OUTLINED IN THE MAYOR'S FY 2000 FINANCIAL PLAN.

IN CLOSING, FOR AS MUCH PROGRESS AS THE COUNCIL HAS MADE, THERE REMAINS WORK TO BE DONE IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION REFORM. THE AUTHORITY, MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND SUPERINTENDENT ARE COMMITTED TO

CONTINUE WORKING TOGETHER IN SUPPORT OF PUBLIC EDUCATION. I BELIEVE THAT THE SCHOOL SYSTEM IS HEADED IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION TO BRING ABOUT ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE FOR THE DISTRICT'S SCHOOLS. WE HAVE ALREADY BEGAN TO SEE POSITIVE CHANGE. MS. ACKERMAN SHOULD BE COMMENDED FOR HER EFFORT AND PERSEVERANCE IN ACCEPTING THE MANY CHALLENGES TO REFORM THE SCHOOL SYSTEM. TO FURTHER SUPPORT THE DISTRICT'S SCHOOL REFORM, I AM ASKING THE CONGRESS TO SUPPORT PRESIDENT CLINTON'S PROPOSAL FOR NEW TEACHERS IN ORDER TO LOWER CLASS SIZES. IF THE PRESIDENT'S BUDGET IS APPROVED, THE DISTRICT WILL BE ABLE TO HIRE AN ADDITIONAL 145 NEW TEACHERS.

AGAIN, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY AND FOR YOUR SUPPORT. I LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU. I WILL RESPOND TO ANY QUESTIONS YOU MAY HAVE.

Mr. DAVIS. Ms. Newman.

Ms. NEWMAN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman and Congresswoman Norton and members of the subcommittee. I am the member of the Authority with lead responsibility for public education and appreciate the opportunity to testify this morning. When I asked your staff how much time, they went 5, 4, 3, and I stopped them before they said 1 minute, but I will race through because I know that the full statement will be in the record.

We do believe that permanent change is occurring and tangible progress is being made in all areas of public education, and, importantly, in the interest of the children of the District of Columbia. These improvements are the result of effective leadership and development of a strong reform-minded team under the leadership of Arlene Ackerman, superintendent, and chief executive officer. These changes have been in academic performance, in management, and in fiscal environment.

The Authority is pleased with and fully supports the direction of her efforts and is committed to the aggressive reform agenda she has established. Through all of her efforts, the Emergency Transitional Board of Trustees has supported her.

We are further encouraged by the efforts under way to involve the elected school board in the governance of the school system as an active partner in improving student academic performance. The priority of the Authority has been to ensure that the Board of Education is fully prepared to assume responsibility for the school system by June 30, 2000.

A key element in the transition plan that has recently been put together requires the Board of Education and the superintendent to develop a strategic plan that contains short and long-term goals and objectives. The Authority is committed to working with all parties to ensure that transition plan is fully implemented.

With regard to academic performance of students, the Authority is pleased. The results of the initiatives of the superintendent, elimination of social promotion, implementation of the Summer STARS program, increased principal and teacher accountability, more service and training, and more parental involvement, have contributed to the students' better academic performance.

Turning now to physical improvements, I'm pleased with the efforts of the superintendent and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to make the schools cleaner and safer. Much progress has been made in the last year. The Corps understands that a lead responsibility of the elected school board is to develop a master plan, a long-range facilities master plan. They are prepared to work with the school board in preparing this very important document.

It was mentioned earlier and I should reinforce the importance of the charter schools and the charter school movement. We do believe that the District can be a model for the rest of the country, given, frankly, the fact that we have moved faster than any other jurisdiction in establishing charter schools. We do know that we need to work in a much more efficient and effective way in supporting charter schools, particularly in addressing their space requirements.

For the second year in a row we know with confidence how many students are in the schools. Knowing the exact number has become

more important since the adoption of the per pupil funding formula and the superintendent's plans to use a weighted student formula to allocate funds to the individual schools. We believe that this new formula is an equitable way to fund education and will address some of the inequities that have existed between schools. We will work with the Council and the Mayor to address any problems that surface through the implementation of this formula.

As required by the act, the Authority hired an independent auditor to audit the school's official enrollment count of 75,000. The independent auditor has verified the number. It is 75,483. I think it's give or take. While we have made progress, the Authority is still concerned, however, with the level of documentation being maintained by the school system and the public charter schools with regard to verification of residents.

I want to second Chairman Chavous's concern about special education. Nearly 10,000 students are expected in special education in the coming year. Fiscal year 2000 special education programs will consume more than \$170 million of the appropriated budget. The Authority supports the initiative of Council Member Chavous to assemble a task force which will include the courts, the administration, educators, and parents to develop a coordinated and comprehensive response to address this problem.

In conclusion, the Authority is pleased with the progress in the District's schools. Superintendent Ackerman and her team of committed educators and managers are energetically tackling the education and management problems confronting the public schools, and we can see evidence of change. My colleagues and I recognize that much still needs to be done, and sustained reform will require the cooperation and participation of this entire community. We are committed to working with all parties to ensure long-term improvements in the interests of the children.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Newman follows:]

**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA FINANCIAL  
RESPONSIBILITY AND MANAGEMENT  
ASSISTANCE AUTHORITY**



**Hearing before the  
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia  
Committee on Government Reform and Oversight  
United States House of Representatives**

**Public Education**

**Dr. Alice M. Rivlin**  
*Chair*

**Ms. Constance Newman**  
*Vice Chairman*

**Mr. Robert Watkins**  
*Member*

**Mr. Eugene Kinlow**  
*Member*

**Dr. Darius Mans**  
*Member*

Friday, April 30, 1999

- For Release Upon Delivery -



**Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee:**

I am Constance Newman. I am the vice chair of the District of Columbia Financial Responsibility and Management Assistance Authority ("Authority") and the member with lead responsibility for public education in the District of Columbia. I appreciate the opportunity to testify on the reform of public education in the District of Columbia, and we are pleased that progress is being made.

**Overview**

Inasmuch as the Authority views public education as one of the most critical public service issues for the District, we devote considerable time and attention to providing oversight over the D.C. Public Schools. Our oversight efforts have focused on ensuring that the serious deficiencies in governance, academic performance, management, and the physical environment identified in our November 1996 Report, "Children In Crisis: A Report on the Failure of the D.C. Public Schools," are corrected and that overall improvements in education are realized.

Since the Authority assumed responsibility for the school system, permanent change is occurring and tangible progress is being made in all areas of public education. These improvements are the result of effective leadership and the development of a strong reform-minded team. Under the leadership of Ms. Arlene Ackerman, Superintendent/Chief Executive Officer, major changes are being made in the schools' academic performance, management, and physical environment. The Authority is pleased with and fully supports the direction of these efforts and is fully committed to

the aggressive reform agenda she has established. Through all of her efforts, the Emergency Transitional Board of Trustees has supported her. We are further encouraged by the efforts underway to involve the Board of Education in the governance of the school system as an active and integral partner in improving student academic performance.

A priority of the Authority has been to ensure that the Board of Education is fully prepared to assume responsibility for the school system by June 30, 2000. To accomplish this, we established a District of Columbia School Board of Education Transition Planning Team, chaired by Dr. Mary Futrell, Dean of the George Washington University Graduate School of Education. The Team included representatives of the Board of Education and the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees and parents. The Transition Team was charged with developing a plan to gradually transfer policy and governance responsibility back to the Board of Education, to strengthen the leadership capacity of the Board, and to involve the Board of Education in reform efforts underway. The Transition Plan includes various action steps and a time schedule for accomplishing the actions in the Transition Plan. The Transition Plan calls for the active participation and involvement of the Superintendent. A key element of the Transition Plan requires the Board of Education and the Superintendent to develop a strategic plan that contains short and long-term goals, objectives, and strategies for improving student attainment. The Authority and the Board of Education have fully adopted the Transition Plan and the elements of the Plan are currently being implemented. The Authority is committed to working with all the parties to ensure that the Transition Plan is fully implemented.

**Academic Improvement and Accountability**

With regard to the academic performance of students, the Authority is pleased. The results of initiatives of the Superintendent -- elimination of "social promotion"; implementation of the Summer Star programs; increased principal and teacher accountability; more in-service training; and more parental involvement -- have contributed to the students' better academic performance. The Superintendent continues to set aggressive goals for student performance. During the next fiscal year, the Superintendent has set as a goal to reduce the number of students scoring "below basic" on the Stanford 9 Achievement Test by 10 percent and to increase the percentage of students scoring at the "proficient" and "advanced" levels by 5 percent. The Authority's expectation is that the academic plan will provide the basis and lay out the necessary actions to accomplish those goals.

Complementing the efforts in improving student achievement, Mrs. Ackerman, with the assistance of the Council of Great City Schools, conducted a detailed examination of the financial and administrative operations which support the education reform strategy. The Superintendent has taken steps to address critical areas like special education. We all recognize that further improvements are necessary in the administrative operations of the school system. The Authority is working with Mrs. Ackerman to ensure that they are made.

**Physical improvements in the D.C. Public Schools**

Turning now to physical improvements, I am pleased with the efforts of the Superintendent and the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to make the schools cleaner and safer. Much progress has been made in the last year, including roof repairs at more than sixty schools; replacement of numerous boilers, air conditioners, and windows; and correction of fire code violations. The Public Schools have disposed of surplus facilities and will generate more than \$10 million in revenues to defray infrastructure improvements. The Corps of Engineers is assisting in improving the maintenance program of the schools. They will work with the Board in preparing a realistic Long-Range Facilities Master Plan, which guides the school's capital improvement strategy. It is our present thinking that the revised Long-Range Facilities Master Plan ("Master Plan") should lay out a strategy for determining the schools' infrastructure needs for the next ten years. It should identify how those needs will be met and it should include a collaborative process for involving the community and soliciting input for the Master Plan's implementation. The growth of the number of charter schools—now at 20—and the need to examine their space requirements must also be addressed by the Master Plan.

The Authority believes that the proposed Fiscal Year 2000 budget lays out a strategy for addressing the capital improvement requirements of the school system. The proposed Fiscal Year 2000 budget, which requests \$29.8 million, will include \$10.9 million to modernize 8 schools and \$15.6 million to renovate bathrooms. Under the Transition Plan which I earlier referred to, the Board of Education is charged with adopting the Master Plan. Our understanding is that the Board of

Education will solicit the views of various stakeholders and will incorporate those views, where feasible, in the Master Plan.

#### **Number of Students in the Public Schools**

For the second year in a row, we know with confidence how many students are in the schools. Knowing the exact number has become more important since the adoption of the per-pupil funding formula and the Superintendent's plans to use a weighted student formula to allocate funds to the individual schools. This will be the first year in which resources will be determined by the number of students in the public and charter schools. We believe that a student-based formula is an equitable way to fund education and will address some of the inequities that have existed between schools. We will work with the Council and the Mayor to address any problems that surface through the implementation of the per pupil formula, which was required by the "District of Columbia School Reform Act of 1995 ("Act").

As required by the Act, the Authority hired an independent auditor to audit the schools' official enrollment count of 75,483 students for the 1998-1999 academic year. The independent auditor has verified the number of students. In addition to an audit of the official enrollment, the Authority hired an independent contractor to conduct in February of this year a head count of students in the public and charter schools. The independent head count further confirmed the results of the enrollment audit. Parents or guardians in DCPS are required to provide proof of payment of Federal or D.C. income taxes or receipt of public assistance and two additional proofs of District

residency. While we have made progress, the Authority is still concerned with the level of documentation being maintained by DCPS and the public charter schools to verify residence. The individual charter schools have their own standards for determining residency. The auditor reported that significant improvements have been made in the Student Information System, but better equipment is needed. The D.C. School System has issued a Request for Proposals to obtain the needed equipment so that further improvements may be made.

#### **Special Education**

Mr. Chairman, I wish to mention Special Education, to which the Authority devotes considerable attention. Special Education remains troublesome for the District. Nearly 10,000 students are expected in special education in the coming school year. As we have previously reported, this growth is having tremendous implications for the future cost of education and the pace of educational reform. In FY 2000, special education will consume more than \$170 million of the appropriated budget. Mrs. Ackerman has devoted significant resources to reducing the backlog of special education assessments. The increase of the referral and assessment period from 50 to 120 days has had an appreciative impact on the number of private placements, which is a significant cost. The Authority supports the initiative of Councilmember Chavous to assemble a task force, which will involve the courts, the administration, educators, and parents to develop a coordinated and comprehensive response to address this problem. The Authority will work on those efforts with the Superintendent, the Council of the District of Columbia, and other parties to improve service delivery to this special population.

**Closing**

In conclusion, Mr. Chairman, the Authority is pleased with progress in the District schools. Superintendent Ackerman and her team of committed educators and managers are energetically tackling the education and management problems confronting the public schools and we can see the evidence of change. My colleagues and I recognize that much still needs to be done and sustained reform will require the cooperation and participation of this entire community. We are committed to working with all parties to ensure long term improvements.

Mr. DAVIS. Mrs. Ackerman.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Good morning, Mr. Chairman, Congresswoman Norton, Congressman Horn and Congresswoman Biggert. I am Arlene Ackerman, superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools. I thank you for providing me the opportunity to share the status of DCPS.

At our previous hearing last spring, we shared with you what the school system was doing to build an exemplary school system. I recall you asking me on a few occasions, but particularly at that particular hearing, if school would open on time, and I answered yes. Indeed, school did open on time like it does across every other school district in this country. I am confident that we will never have to ask that question again, and it's such a basic question. What we want to focus on now are the larger issues that face our urban system as we try to provide our youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to turn dreams into reality.

Since that hearing, we at central office and the principals and teachers and parents in each school have been busy with the reform agenda. Our focus is clear, and that is improving teaching and learning. We have put in place clear standards for what students should know and be able to do in all areas and all content areas. We have invested more in professional development and plan to extend and expand our efforts to reach every teacher with sustained learning opportunities.

We have continued to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers making important capital improvements. Full facility assessments have been completed for all schools, and we have begun plans for full school rehabilitation for one school in each ward next year while we work with the elected board on a long-range facility plan. For 1999, procurement actions for five roof replacement projects, the long-range master facility plan, and education specifications have been initiated. If we want to see our children learn, we need to assure a safe environment where principals and teachers have the adequate resources that they need.

The District is continuing with a principal evaluation that sends a clear signal to principals that academic growth is our No. 1 priority. We have also implemented, though, this year a new teacher evaluation. Principals now have the ability to identify low-performing teachers, give them assistance, and should they not show signs of improvement within 90 days, the teacher can be dismissed.

Our investment in instructional technology is bringing more computers to every school in addition to additional training to our teachers and support staff. In order to provide more instructional time for our students who we know need extended opportunities to learn, we have created a Saturday morning program across the District. We are proud to say that more than 10,000 students attend our Saturday academies where we focus on reading and writing and math. We are making important changes and are preparing for a summer school where we expect and anticipate upward of 25,000 students to attend.

Across the District, student achievement showed gains between the spring of 1997 and spring of 1998, and I'm confident that we will continue to see that kind of growth. Special education, however, continues to be an area that the deeper we go, the more chal-



allenges we seem to face. It is clear that drastic changes were needed and are still needed, and we are taking actions to try new solutions. We have had difficulty attracting staff to the District in this area as there is a national shortage of special ed educators, and many are skeptical to join a department that has had such a long history of neglect. We have developed, however, a new incentive package to try and become more competitive with surrounding jurisdictions.

We are also working to grow our own staff with local universities and changing how we think about delivering services to students. After reviewing current practices and looking at other districts, we are now convinced that one of our problems has been that the local school has not been involved in the assessment process. We will see changes over the next month, and you will hear us announce changes over the next 30 days that will drastically change the way that we do business in special education. You will also see a realignment of and a redeployment of special ed staff, central office staff, as well as central resources that will go to the schools. I can only hope that the community will remain patient as we make these changes in many areas.

One of the most important reform initiatives of this year, however, is the planning we have done for implementing the new weighted student formula. We are assuring that resources follow the students based on need and the needs of the student, and that schools have the opportunity to make decisions about the best way to use those resources. Across the District principals, teachers, and parents and community members will now make the decisions about how to allocate those resources, not central office. For the first time in this community, every school and every member of the public will know where the resources go and how the resources are being spent at each school as well as the logic behind how the schools decide to spend their resources.

In the past few months, we have worked hard to develop the weighted student formula. We have had numerous community meetings to share the weighted student formula with the community, and we have made changes in central office to better support schools in the development of their school plans. Each school now has completed a full needs assessment, developed a school plan and a budget. Our principals, parents, and teachers have worked many, many hours over the past 2 months to develop these plans. The process has provided a powerful experience for our principals, parents, teachers, and community members to learn more about their school and chart a course for its future. We have heard many positive comments about this experience. We believe that giving authority to schools for a budget and staffing offer schools the opportunity to realize their dreams.

One reason that we have been able to implement this reform is because of the change in how we as a system are to be funded by the city this coming year. We have created our school budget following the law that the City Council developed and passed a year ago. We are making sure that more resources now go to the schools. The law created a per pupil formula that funds the charter schools and the D.C. Public Schools in the same manner. The formula in the law is clear in determining and providing a method-

ology. We constructed our budget based on what the law generates, and we are proud to say that of the proposed budget, 94 percent will go directly to schools and less than 6 percent to central's office. This is down from 15 percent 2 years ago, a central office budget that was at 15 percent.

We have come a long way, and we still have a long way to go. Our reform agenda and budget request is based upon the law and meeting the needs of our students. We have closed the budget deficit, and we want to ensure stable funding as intended by the law. I urge you to support us as we shape the budget that will allow us to carry forth our reform agenda. We have made progress, and we are proud of that progress, but we do realize that we still have a very long way to go. Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Ackerman follows:]

STATEMENT OF ARLENE ACKERMAN  
Superintendent  
District of Columbia Public Schools  
on the District of Columbia Public Schools  
Before The Subcommittee on The District Of Columbia  
Committee on Government Reform  
US House House of Representatives

April 30, 1999

Good Morning Mr. Chairman and Members of the Subcommittee. I am Arlene Ackerman, Superintendent of the District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS). Thank you for providing me the opportunity to share the status of DCPS. At our previous hearing last fall, we shared with you what the school system was doing to build an exemplary system. I recall your asking me on a few occasions if school would open on time and I answered yes. Indeed school did open on time like it does across every other district in this country. I hope we will never have to question such a basic educational issue again and that we can focus on the larger issues that face all urban systems as they try to provide youth with the skills and knowledge necessary to turn dreams into reality.

Since that hearing we at central office and the principals and teachers in each school have been busy with the reform agenda. Our focus is clear -- improving teaching and learning. We have put in place clear standards for what students should know and be able to do in all areas. We have invested more in professional development and plan to expand our efforts to reach every teacher with sustained learning opportunities. We have continued to work with the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers making important capital improvements. Full facility assessments have been completed for all the schools. We have begun plans for full school rehabilitation for one school in each ward next year while we wait for the elected board's long range facility plan. For FY 99, procurement actions for 5 roof replacement projects, the long range master plan and education specifications have been initiated. If we want to see our children learn, we need to assure safe environments where principals and teachers have the adequate resources and support.

The district is continuing with a principal evaluation that sends a clear signal to principals that academic growth is our number one priority. We have also implemented a new teacher evaluation. Principals now have the ability to identify low performing teachers and should they not show signs of improvement within ninety days, the teacher can be let go. Our

investment in instructional technology is bringing more computers to every school. In order to provide more instructional time for our students, we created a Saturday morning program across the district and we will continue summer school again this year. We are making important changes that I think will contribute to continued progress in the achievement of our students. Across the district students showed gains between the spring 97 and spring 98 and I am confident that growth will continue.

Special Education continues to be an area that the deeper we go, the more challenges we seem to face. It is clear the drastic changes were needed and we are taking actions to try new solutions. We have had difficulty attracting staff to the district in this area as there is a national shortage and many are skeptical to join a department that had been so neglected. We have developed a new incentive package to try and be more competitive with surrounding jurisdictions. We are also working to grow our own staff with local universities and changing how we think about delivering services. After reviewing current practice and looking at other districts, we are convinced the local school staff need to be more involved in student assessment and program development. I can only hope that the community will remain patient as we make changes in many areas.

One of the most important reform initiatives of this year is the planning we have done for implementing the weighted student formula. We are assuring that resources follow the student based on the needs of the student and that schools have the opportunity to make decisions about the best way to use those resources. The principals, teachers, parents and community members will now make the decisions about how to allocate those resources, not central office. For the first time in this community every school and every member of the public will know what resources go to each school and the logic behind why each school gets the resources it does.

In the past few months, we have worked hard to develop the weighted student formula. We have had numerous community meetings to share the WSF with the community and we have made changes in central office to better support schools in the development of their school plans. Each school has completed a full needs assessment, developed a school plan and budget. Our principals, parents, and teachers have worked many hours over the past two months to develop these plans. The process has provided a powerful experience for the principal, parents, teachers, and community members to learn more about their school and chart a course for its future. We have heard many positive comments about the experience. Giving authority to schools for budget and staffing offers schools the opportunity to realize new dreams.

One reason we have been able to implement this reform is because of the change in how we as a system are to be funded by the city this coming year. We have created our school budget following the law that the city council developed and passed a few years ago, DC Act 12-494. We are making sure that more resources go directly to schools. The law created a per pupil formula that funds the charter schools and the DC public schools in the same manner. The formula in the law is clear in providing a methodology to determine what resources the public schools are to receive for fiscal year 2000. We constructed our budget based on what the law generates for us. In the proposed budget 94% goes directly to schools and less than 6% to central office.

We have come a long way, and we still have a long way to go. Our reform agenda and budget request is based upon the law and meeting the needs of the children of DC. One reason for the law was to protect the interest of children against unstable funding and the risk of funding losses. We have closed the budget deficit and want to assure stable funding as intended by the law. I urge you in your support of DCPS to show your support for the spirit of DC Act 12-494 and the per pupil formula that shapes the budget and allows us to carry out the reform agenda.

Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Maudine Cooper.

Mrs. COOPER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, Mrs. Norton, Mrs. Biggert. I'm very pleased to provide testimony to you this morning on behalf of the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees, which I chair. Next month will be our superintendent's first anniversary, having held this incredible responsibility over the last year, and we want to congratulate her in advance of that anniversary, but also recognize that while her modesty and those of this panel view her progress as incremental, from what we know, sitting as the Board of Trustees, it is really incredible. The challenges that she has faced, the management by discovery in some instances, has made it more than just a small incremental activity. It really has been incredible.

I want to say to you that we as the Board of Trustees view our responsibility as supportive of the mission of educational reform. This mission can be succinctly grouped into four core areas as defined by the Financial Authority: improved academic performance for all students; the promotion of educational equity; the institution of sound management practices; and the development of a safe, healthy and cost-effective environment in which our children can learn.

Our role as trustees is that of a policy-oriented support group and not one of micromanagement, and certainly not micromanaging the superintendent and her staff. Our job is to support her by marshaling the forces that we bring to the community, that we bring to this task by virtue of our roles in the community.

As you know, Mr. Chairman, and Council Member Norton particularly, we are not educational experts, and I think we were selected for that reason. The revelations found in *Children in Crisis* serve as the backdrop by which we function, and we take that seriously.

So we are very pleased with the superintendent's performance, but, again, we know personally of the challenges that she faces as she tries to improve the educational activity for 71,889 students in our system.

My presentation will follow the six summary areas, Mr. Chairman, that you outlined in your questions to us. No. 1, the DCPS future capital improvement plan. On January 28, the superintendent proposed and the trustees approved a comprehensive capital improvement plan, which, I believe, was shared with your office. At any rate, the goal of that plan was to make our schools engaging, compelling, effective, and efficient environments for learning, teaching, working, and for community activities. We are very proud of that, and the preliminary total budget for years 1 through 10 is approximately \$1 billion.

The plan encompasses everything for modernization, public-private partnerships and ADA improvements to name a few. I might add that includes the toilets that you have heard so much about lately.

Item No. 2 was the update on DCPS's academic plan. As to the academic plan, the trustees have supported the curriculum thrust that our superintendent had put forth: ending social promotion; developing more challenging academic standards; creating new report cards and new school profiles; increasing reading and math pro-

grams; and, of course, as you have already heard, the Saturday STARS program and the SAT 9 students, who will be working in those Saturday programs for 3 hours, approximately 3 hours; as well as now a program that is going on on Saturdays besides the summer program, the development of the Summer STARS program in which more, as you know, over 22,000 students, attended for 6 weeks. We have also adopted a new K through 6 reading and math series. You heard about the weighted student formula.

Item 3 that you presented to us was an update on the DCPS technology plan. You already heard something about that from various members of this panel. We are very pleased to see that the city administrators and superintendent are proposing again to make sure that we have adequate technology in our schools; however, there are some problems. Procurement falls under the city, as you know. This means that DCPS is required to rely on city administrators and city procedures to purchase fundamental items for its students. In a word, this is a ludicrous process.

We have got a superintendent who has to rely on others, in my judgment, second-guessing her in terms of what she needs and when she needs it. Given this what I call a bureaucratic and convoluted paradigm through which we attempt to purchase instructional materials for our children, DCPS is literally held hostage to the city. Because of this we cannot purchase in a timely fashion such fundamental items as computers and, indeed, textbooks.

For the record, because of this choke hold in our procurement processes, there are now over 588 backlog requisitions that do affect the education of our children. These requisitions are simply caught up in someone's bureaucratic pipeline. Again, if there is a problem, it should be brought to the attention of our superintendent and not allowed to languish. The procurement should indeed report to the superintendent, not to the city. If we have the responsibility, then we need the authority.

Given the 1997–1998 school year, DCPS has developed an educational technology plan. It is my understanding that it has been approved by the Federal Department of Education. It is entitled Beyond 1977—Children First. We believe that this is very critical and a true testament of the superintendent's support by the Federal Department of Education.

As you also know, we are already on the Internet and have e-mail.

Finally, I will quickly go through the other question that you raised on teacher certification. We have been informed by staff that all teachers employed by DCPS hold certification.

I will sum up. We are very pleased with that, and we wanted you to know that on the record. We are doing all kinds of things to indeed increase those student bodies.

On No. 5, I will just indicate that we do discuss the budget, but I will say that the fiscal year 2000 budget that is stated at 704 million is incorrectly stated. That is a total budget including our grants and projects. The accurate number is \$627.5 million.

In terms of the charter school, that has already been discussed, and this is in my testimony.

I will conclude that by stating that we have done something else as trustees. Working with the Federal City Council, the D.C.

Chamber, and the Board of Trade, we have instituted what we call two very active business groups that work with us to help us bring in line the school system and the needs of our business community. After all, we are training these young people to go into the community as workers and not as those on the dole. With this alliance, we are concentrating on school to careers, literacy, technology, and the arts. It is an incredibly fantastic bunch of people, and we hope that they will be here at some point to talk to you as well. I thank you for your time.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much.

[The prepared statement of Mrs. Cooper follows:]



Emergency Transitional  
Education Board of Trustees

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STATEMENT OF MAUDINE R. COOPER  
CHAIRPERSON, DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
EMERGENCY TRANSITIONAL EDUCATION  
BOARD OF TRUSTEES

April 30, 1999

*Before the Committee on the District of Columbia  
United States House of Representatives  
Congressman Tom Davis, Chairman*

Good morning and thank you for providing me the opportunity of updating the Committee on the significant progress that we have made in the District of Columbia Public Schools since May of 1998. May is a hallmark month since this was the month that our Superintendent, Arlene Ackerman first took over the reigns of the city's public school system as our Superintendent.

Over these past 11 months we have witnessed a true renaissance in both spirit and actual reforms in our public school system. A spirit that is catching and reforms that are evident. The credit goes to the leadership of Mrs. Ackerman, for without her leadership and her incredible courage to make bold changes this renaissance would have been incremental, **rather than incredible!**

As the Chair of the Emergency Transitional Education Board of Trustees, I want to be perfectly clear on the fundamental task that we as Trustees serve as to the mission of educational reform.

This mission can be succinctly grouped into **Four Core Areas** as defined by the Financial Authority: **Improved Academic Performance for all students; the Promotion of Educational Equity; the Institution of Sound Management Practices; and, the Development of a Safe, Healthy, and Cost Effective Environment in which Children can learn.**

**Our role is that of a policy oriented support group, and not one of micromanaging the superintendent or her staff. Our job is to support Mrs. Ackerman through marshalling the resources that we as community members command.**

The revelations found in "*Children in Crisis*" serve as the backdrop as to why we take our role as Trustees seriously. This is why we serve; and, for us to serve is an honor.

If we were to define eras by leadership and courage, then this is the era of Arlene Ackerman. An era characterized by high standards, steady progress, clear goals, honest answers, no surprises;

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*Children First*

Testimony of Maudine Cooper, Chair  
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April 30, 1999  
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problem solving, and relentless commitment toward educational improvement for the 71,889 students enrolled in our system.

My presentation this morning will be brief and will reflect a governance and policy perspective in six key areas as requested by Congressman Davis. Those areas include:

1. **The Capital Improvement Plan and the rehabilitation and modernization of facilities.**
2. **The District of Columbia Academic Plan**
3. **The Technology Plan**
4. **Teacher Certification**
5. **The DCPS Budget in relation to resources to fulfill our academic excellence strategic plan**
6. **The status of present as well as prospective public charter schools**

For the record, I wanted to highlight some of the more vivid reforms that Mrs. Ackerman has initiated over the past 11 months.

#### **I. The DCPS FUTURE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN**

On January 28, 1999, the Superintendent proposed and the Trustees approved a comprehensive Capital Improvement Plan for Fiscal Year 1999. The Goal of this plan was *"To make our schools engaging, compelling, effective, and efficient environments for learning, teaching, working and community activities."*

In actuality, this 1999-year plan kicks off a ten-year modernization program that will bring all schools in the District up to an adequate and explicit standard for the 21<sup>st</sup> Century by the year 2009. The preliminary total budget for years 1 through 10 is approximately \$1 Billion.

This Plan encompasses areas such as Modernization; Public/Private Partnerships, and ADA Improvements, to name a few. A schedule for this activity is underway for the out years. We anticipate enhancing our current \$40 million a year expenditure with funds from the city that hopefully will equate to a total expenditure of approximately \$100 million per year over the next 10 years. This would be the ideal. And obviously, we want to fix the bathrooms and toilets, replace the roofs, boilers, and central cooling and heating systems.

Testimony of Maudine Cooper, Chair  
Emergency Transitional Education  
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## **II. UPDATE ON DCPS ACADEMIC PLAN**

As to the District of Columbia Academic Plan, the Trustees have supported the curricular thrust that Mrs. Ackerman has initiated toward:

- **Ending social promotion**
- **Developing more challenging academic standards**
- **Creating new report cards and new school profiles for every school**
- **Increasing reading and math programs**
- **Initiating the Saturday STARS program that coincides with the results of the SAT 9 to assure that students scoring below basic have a 16 week, 3 hours per Saturday remedial reading instruction**
- **Developing a Summer STARS program in which over 22,000 students attended for six weeks of intensive instruction program**
- **Adopting a new K-6 reading and math series**
- **Developing an innovative Weighted Student Formula that promises a laser-like focus on bringing a more equitable distribution of educational dollars to the classroom to assure that educational dollars follow the student and that school sites are held accountable for the use of these dollars toward improving academic achievement.**

## **III. UPDATE on the DCPS TECHNOLOGY PLAN**

We could probably move faster in this area but due to the convoluted procurement process that rests with the City, our hands are tied. Presently, Procurement falls under the City. This means that DCPS is required to rely on City administrators and City procedures to purchase fundamental items for its 71,889 students. In a word, this is Ludicrous!

The current procurement system as it is now constituted lacks responsiveness; and, students are ultimately hurt by a system that is now characterized by indifference and neglect. Given this bureaucratic-convoluted paradigm through which we attempt to purchase instructional materials for children, DCPS is held hostage to the City. Because of this, we cannot timely purchase such fundamental items as computers and textbooks.

Testimony of Maudine Cooper, Chair  
Emergency Transitional Education  
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**For the record, because of this chokehold on our procurement processes there are now over 588 backlogged requisitions that affect children. These requisitions are simply caught up in someone's bureaucratic pipeline. This has to be changed. Procurement should report to the Superintendent, not to the City! If we have the responsibility, then give us the authority!**

During the 1997-98 school year DCPS developed an Educational Technology Plan. **This plan was entitled, "Beyond 1997-Children First."** This plan is the backbone of our efforts to improve instructional technology for our students in 5,500 classrooms throughout our District. Since the plan was initially developed, virtually all schools are now connected to the Internet and have E-Mail.

Our technology plans call for more hardware, more software, training, additional staff, and of course, more funds to accomplish all of this. In fact our 2000 Fiscal Year budget request calls for an additional \$1 million for Instructional Technology, and an additional \$500,000 for MIS.

Lastly, in accordance with the Mayor's proposed Budget, DCPS will work with the Mayor's office to establish a new technology center at a cost of \$2.2 million for FY 2000 and approximately \$25 million over the next 5 years.

#### **IV. Status OF DCPS TEACHER CERTIFICATION**

Presently, all teachers employed by DCPS hold certification. Last year we enforced our five-year rule requiring all teachers to be fully certified within three years after their initial employment; **if they were employed under anything less than a full credential.** According to our Teacher Licensing and Certification department, there are approximately 890 teachers on one-year licenses. This represents approximately 17% of the 5,197 teachers employed by DCPS. This is not unusual given the national teacher shortage in critical teaching areas. We fully expect that the overwhelming majority of these teachers will obtain the full certification by the end of this school year.

In terms of teacher recruitment, the Human Resource department has an excellent plan, which has taken them to 15 on-campus recruitment trips. The majority of these recruitment efforts were out of state.

We have held two major recruitment fairs with one more scheduled for next month. Given teacher attrition, retirements, and certification issues, we project somewhere over 400 teaching vacancies. This is a flexible number and might well drop accordingly.

Additionally, DCPS is exploring full reciprocity for out of state teacher candidates. This will expand our current candidate pool of approximately 800 teachers.

Testimony of Maudine Cooper, Chair  
 Emergency Transitional Education  
 Board of Trustees  
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#### V. STATUS OF DCPS BUDGET: RESOURCES FOR the ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE STRATEGIC PLAN.

In accordance with Mrs. Akerman's emphasis of placing "Children First," we will end this fiscal year in a positive fiscal status. Our budget was balanced after closing a deficit in excess of \$62 million dollars for FY 1999. To continue and build upon the many instructional achievements noted earlier under section two above, our Superintendent, with the Support of the Trustees is requesting an operating budget for FY 2000 of \$704,646,000. And a proposed Capital Budget of \$73 million. Anything short of this requested amount would have dire consequences for educational reform in our Public Schools.

Nearly \$41 million in additional resources are being requested to fund the newly developed "Weighted Student Formula." This WSF, as it is called is a new method of allocating funds to schools based on student needs. Our additional funding request is generated by and in concert with the per pupil formula developed by the City Council.

On top of this, the DCPS budget request also calls for \$4.5 million additional dollars to address the needs of "Targeted Assisted Schools," and an additional \$500,000 for "school performance awards." These awards are intended to reward achievement.

#### VI. STATUS of D.C. PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOLS

There are currently 19 Public Charter Schools presently operating in the District of Columbia. The fall of 1998 literally witnessed a mushrooming effect of Charter Schools. Prior to this time, only 2 Charter Schools were operative in the District of Columbia. The current Budget is approximately \$28.8 million. This amount does not include funds for facilities. However, the need for start-up funds to address their facility needs looms most important.

The average per pupil expenditure per Charter School Student approximates \$7,085. This does not include the approximate \$400,000 allocated to the Public Charter School Board, or the approximate \$300,000 allocated to the Board of Education for Charter School oversight expenses. These two entities are the Chartering Authorities for the District of Columbia.

There are 9 Charter Schools currently leasing property from DCPS. The leases are in accordance with the Charter School Preference Policy. It is projected that up to 5 additional Charter Schools will lease DCPS facilities for next year, bringing the total number of Charter School leases to 14.

There are two pending proposals for Charter School funding for next year. One is the Mayor's, and one is the City Councils. Both approximate the current budget amount of \$28.8 million.

Testimony of Maudine Cooper, Chair  
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**Presently, there are 3,632 students enrolled in the 19 Charter Schools. Staff has apprised us that the growth rate may approximate 1,450 students over this number.**

**There are 7 provisionally approved Charter Schools for next year. The projected enrollment for these new schools approximates 1,800 students. If we combine current enrollment, growth enrollment, and enrollment from new Charter Schools we can anticipate the possibility of 6,882 public Charter School students for next year.**

From the perspective of a State Education Agency, It would appear to us at this time that the two new budget proposals are not in concert with the fiscal needs of Charter School enrollment. As a State Education Agency we work with Charter Schools in the areas of Special Education, Categorical Programs, Teacher Certification, and Federal compliance areas to name a few.

#### **Summation**

I trust that the information that I have provided the Committee this morning addresses some of the salient points that the Committee requested from me as the Chairperson of the Emergency Board of Trustees. On behalf of the Trustees, I want to thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide you with this update.

Again, we want to be perfectly clear. As an appointed Board of Trustees, we support each of the efforts of educational reform that Mrs. Ackerman has put forth these past 11 months. And we want to reiterate that our support is unconditional, for without her leadership, her bravery, her energy, and her intelligent approach to the issues, educational reform for the District of Columbia would be at best shallow, and at worst hollow.

Through the efforts of Mrs. Ackerman and the Emergency Board of Trustees, we have been able to develop an important Alliance of educational support for the aforementioned reforms. This Alliance was formed in consultation with The Federal City Council, The Greater Washington Board of Trade, and The D.C. Chamber of Commerce.

Their collaborative support is intended to further the efforts of educational reform in the areas of School to Careers, Literacy, Technology, and the Arts.

Thank you Mrs. Ackerman, and thank you Congressman Davis and members of the Committee.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me just ask for Mayor Williams and Councilman Chavous, this idea about the procurement not reporting to the superintendent and holding the school system hostage. These are ongoing fights that we used to have out in my county as well and is probably repeated across the country. But even at the Federal level, we have Cabinet officers having to do procurements through GSA. In some ways—Mr. Horn has left, but he has tried to take a leadership role in trying to make sense out of this.

Do you have any reaction to that in terms of the school procurements not having to report but basically go through the city and not having their own autonomy in those areas?

Mr. WILLIAMS. I could let Councilman Chavous and Connie Newman speak on this, but I know that I was at a meeting of the Authority—

Mr. DAVIS. I didn't see him grabbing the microphone.

Ms. NEWMAN. We are going to talk to her later.

Mrs. COOPER. I am a volunteer, sir.

Ms. NEWMAN. We all are.

Mayor WILLIAMS. But in conjunction with the Council, the Mayor's office, the Authority, we have been bringing the managers up to the Authority to look at what assistance they need from the Authority in pursuing our management reform agenda. So we had the director of procurement up there, and in the process of talking about general procurement issues, some issues were raised about the schools. I think the general understanding there is that we were on the road to giving the schools the authority and responsibility to get their job done while still maintaining some central system control. I thought that progress was being made.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me just add that I can remember just anecdotally, which is a tough way to do this, where the schools one year where they had the autonomy didn't order the books on time, and we have gone through that as well. It's a balance as we try to transition back. I think the Mayor and Council probably want to be careful.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, Congressman Davis, this has been an ongoing problem. The procurement responsibility was taken away from the schools last year, frankly, because the procurement process inside the schools was broken. Books weren't being ordered on time, and, again, that is something that predated Mrs. Ackerman.

What we have found this year is there has been what I would call a creative tension between the central procurement office and the school system, so much so that we have an issue regarding certain books being ordered even this year. Ms. Newman and I, and I know that she wants to speak to it because she is grabbing my arm here—but because this is something—you hit the nail on the head. Ms. Newman, Mrs. Ackerman and I have talked about this excessively. We really want—

Mr. DAVIS. You need to include Mrs. Cooper in your discussion.

Mr. CHAVOUS. She has been. When you say balanced, Congressman, that is the key. Right now during this budget process, we want to come up with a way to give the schools enough autonomy so that central procurement doesn't bottleneck the process. While they are reshaping their own procurement capabilities, we want to make sure that there is legitimate safeguards in the process. We

are working through that, and I know that Connie Newman wants to speak about it.

Ms. NEWMAN. Just a second. I don't want to make light of the observation that Mrs. Cooper made. We have had many conversations with the superintendent. There is a new procurement system going into place. There is always difficulty with a new system in place.

My argument is that we need to deal in the short run with the immediate problems of the textbooks and the facilities, the Corps' contract, and then we need to see whether or not this new system will work, because saying that it should move, the authorities should move to the school system, does not address the issue about how the school system will run it. They don't have the people to do it either. I think that it's something that there is always tension on this issue, and I think it's worth a conversation, but maybe not too much.

Mr. DAVIS. I think this is a tension that exists in school systems versus city councils across the country, and getting it right—it is never right in somebody's eyes. I think Mrs. Cooper has brought this to everybody's attention, and I think we have aired out what the difficulties are in trying to work together.

Let me ask, if I could, Mrs. Ackerman, I look at a school system and try to measure results. I want to try to look at where we were maybe a couple of years ago and where we are today. You mentioned the test scores, and if you could get those to us, I'd want to put those in the record. I didn't really see the test scores. Was it in every school, was it up across the way, was it uneven? But test scores are certainly one way of measuring progress. Yeah, open the schools on time, that's the way of measuring progress given where we were. You look at the state of the facilities of the schools and a lot of work has gone into that. That is a way of measuring progress.

What about safety in the schools? Have we made progress there over the last year?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We have put in place—we have. Our incidents are down, and we can give you those, get you those.

Mr. DAVIS. Are they down significantly or just marginally?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I would say—I wouldn't say significantly. They're down enough where we can say we're making progress, and we still need to put some more things in place, but they're down enough where I can count that as one of the successes, that we are showing some progress. In addition—

Mr. DAVIS. Let me just stop right there. If we're making progress there, why are we replacing the contractor with the police department? I'll ask Mr. Chavous, and I have a couple of other questions for you but I just thought—

Mr. CHAVOUS. I think that we are making progress, but I think we're spending a lot of money. That contract is \$9.5 million and we get 315 security officers, and in looking at what other school districts are doing; namely, Baltimore and New York, they have shifted that responsibility over to the police. The key, though, is you have to have the right approach by the police so they will work with the superintendent and make sure that teachers and principals don't feel like they're under occupation and that there is



some seamless continuity between the public safety efforts inside and outside the school, and so the reason why we did it is really for more efficiency and hopefully for not as much cost.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, I just don't want you to feel that, when it comes to school safety, we do it on the cheap and I really—

Mr. CHAVOUS. No, we're not going to do that, but the other thing is, we felt that it was important to bring all of those kind of efforts under one shop so that you had the school security, you have police officers and you also have crossing guards. I mean, you have the whole apparatus there working to support what the school system is doing and working with the local school.

Mr. DAVIS. All right. Well, we're going to be watching because we've made measurable progress and now you're shifting, and we want to continue to see that. I mean it's a Council decision at this point and it's just from our perspective something that we're going to want to watch very, very carefully to make sure that we continue progress, if you understand.

Mr. CHAVOUS. I understand. Now it's on my head.

Mr. DAVIS. That is a nice way of saying it. I'll get back for another round of questions, but I'm going to yield to Ms. Norton and then to Mrs. Biggert.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I want to say that I have been informed that Wilma Harvey, the president of the school board, is ill. Two members of the school board are here, Dwight Singleton, the vice-president and new board member who represents ward 4, and Angie Corley, who has long been on the board who represents ward 5. If we have any questions for the board, I'm sure they would be able to answer them. We do have Ms. Harvey's testimony however.

I have a question for—first for Mayor Williams and Councilmember Chavous. First, let me commend Councilmember Chavous for the oversight you are doing of the public schools, and I know that in the budget discussions you are bearing in mind the importance that everybody in this city attaches to the children of this city. I have no doubt about that.

The Mayor testified—and let me also commend you both for what is reported to be good discussions going on between people who want a tax cut and the Mayor who wants to make sure that it is prudently done and that sufficient investment occurs in the city, and I informed my colleagues that there's every reason to believe that those are the kinds of discussions that legislators and the executive always have, and I'm very pleased at what is the reported progress. So I don't have any problems there.

I have a question that flows from the Mayor's testimony. He testified that he was recommending eight schools a year be renovated. A fourth—that's something that parents will be glad to hear, because the ad—let me just add—the ad hoc way of going at schools, based on which one was falling down first, has been a real frustration in the city.

He testified that he desired a 4 or 5 percent raise for teachers. All I can say is good luck. Because with the shortage of teachers in the United States, with big city schools being the last place many recent graduates want to come, my own sense of what Federal Government can do, because I don't think cities are going to

be able to do this for themselves, is to help pay such a premium for teachers so they can really recruit, I don't see how you're going to be able to be competitive with easier places to teach like Prince George's and Montgomery, and Fairfax, but I see where you're going.

Your testimony said that your budget included \$33 million for children and youth for after school programs, noting that that has not only academic effects but that's when most juvenile crime takes place. Now, the reports are that—the concern has been that we have a surplus, and the proposal was to use the surplus to give back money to taxpayers and that some balance was going to be sought between doing that and taking care of what has been some disinvestments, to put it mildly, in the district.

Now, when I say disinvestment, that is not to say the District has not invested. The District is heavily invested in its bureaucracy, hasn't invested in employees, but it sure has had money, and it sure has invested it all around, and finally, folks just got tired of that. But there's been lots of investment in the district, but now that there's a surplus, your budget talks about investments, Council talks about tax cuts. I recognize that part of the problem was that this was going to come out of the surplus, but then we're told, well, don't worry, this will now come out of the operating budget, or at least that's what the newspapers report.

What I would like to ask you, and with Mr. Chavous here, is whether or not with the kinds of investments you're talking about which would not be investments in the bureaucracy, investments in eight schools per year and, and the renovation of eight schools per year, a 4 or 5 percent raise for teachers, \$33 million for children for their after school program, whether investments like this are still on the table, as you discussed, taking money from the operating budget and dealing with the tax cut and somehow bring it all in balance? I'd like some indication of whether or not you—what you testified here today, which was in your original budget, is going to be possible, given the negotiations that are going on.

MR. WILLIAMS. Yes, Ms. Norton, I'm actually confident that we're making progress and that we can maintain this emphasis on school construction modernization. We can maintain this emphasis on our children. There are differences—we're working out differences on how we program that and the structure of that, but there's, I think, a joint commitment to our children and our out of school programs for children, and then, finally, that we work on sizing this tax plan and staging this tax plan so that we can maintain these investments while doing the tax reduction.

So, in other words, we can do it in a fiscally responsible way, we can do these improvements we talked about and maintain these programs out of operating, including the teaching raise.

MS. NORTON. Mr. Chavous.

MR. CHAVOUS. Well, Congresswoman Norton, first of all, thank you for those kind remarks.

This is one area where the Mayor and I in terms of our investment in children and reinvesting in the future of the people of this city, this is one area where the Mayor and I have really been on the same page, and I can tell you that while I'm one of the strong advocates for this tax cut proposal in the Council that I would not

have signed on if I thought it would cut into some of these new investment opportunities, and frankly, the discussions are going quite well between the Mayor and the Council.

And we feel in this case we can have it all, that we can, based on—we can't project too far out in the future in terms of the surpluses because it is too much speculation, but we do know that if things proceed and if the rebirth and resurgence in this city continues, then we should be able to reduce the tax rates consistent with the wishes of the Council, and while at the same time continue with the additional \$300 million to the base in programs.

The Mayor and I met yesterday morning, early I might add, on this \$33 million children initiative. We're going to work that out. We've talked about the teacher raises, and we're going to find a way to work that out. The Council markup in the committee was—stayed pretty true to what the Mayor wanted. There were no cuts into that, and the feeling is that we'll be able to make it all work.

I might add one other point is, this is part of the creative tension that occurs in a democracy. I was really disheartened to hear reports that because the Council feels one way about tax cuts and the Mayor feels another way, it may threaten home rule. Well, that's the essence of home rule and now that we're having these discussions we're going to work it out, and I think it shows that this city is on the rebound, we're moving in the right direction with your leadership, and I appreciate your remarks in saying, look, you all work it out, but work it out and don't cut into the investment of the people, and that's what we're going to do.

The Mayor and I are on the same page, and I tell you one thing, the Mayor and I have really been fighting on this new school construction. I mean, I quarrel with some of my colleagues on how far we should go, and where we want to go as far as the Mayor and I have suggested, that's 8 to 10 schools over the next 10 years. So I'm more heartened by this budget process than any I've been in my 6 years on the Council.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chavous.

Mr. Williams, I do think—I mean, there was some reports about cuts and so forth. I do believe that there are, probably are even as we talk about investment, and I know this is the direction in which you're moving, even as we talk about investment, there is no doubt in my mind that there need to be further, "cuts," but they are cuts in the bureaucracy.

I refer to them as streamlining because I think as you consolidate, and if you build yourself a modern government, the government is—there are going to be cuts. There are going to be cuts, and of course, then there's going to be investments, and this may all come out in the wash.

The only concerns, and ones you seem to be handling very well, are the pace so that investment occurs along with any tax cuts that also occur.

Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you. And let me just add—I know the Mayor has to leave, but Councilman Chavous, I appreciate you putting into perspective, these aren't arguments over tax cuts, but it is part of the process, and I don't know how it could threaten home rule because you're handling it better than we do up here on the Hill,

but I appreciate your clarifying that because we get this back and forth, somebody's not for it and somebody's all for it or there's some big conflict.

And as we noted earlier on, when I met with Councilmen Evans and Catania on the whole tax cut package, this is something that is going to be worked out and it needs to be discussed, it needs to be staffed out, and as we get those numbers in, it moves around a little bit, but grateful to both of you for your leadership.

Mr. Mayor, you're excused. Thank you.

And let me just welcome, if I can, 5th grade class, G&T class from Rockledge Elementary School out in Prince William County in my district, Ms. Norton, who are here today touring the Capitol, and we appreciate you all being with us. This is part of the G&T. They do the school paper, and they're kind of the press corps. So if I'm going to get good press out there, I've got to perform today.

I now yield to the gentleman from California, Mr. Horn.

Mr. HORN. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen. It's good to see all of you because it looks like at last we have a team and people cooperating and working with each other, and that's certainly good news for the people of the city and the Nation in which this is the world's most beautiful city, and we want to keep it that way, and we want to help you improve it.

Let me ask a few general questions on security in terms of the schools. I come from Long Beach, CA, where I think under Carl Cohen's leadership as superintendent, and I'm sure, Superintendent Ackerman, you probably know Carl. He's done an outstanding job, as have a number of superintendents before him, and one of the things we had to grapple with was school security, and I'd just be curious the degree, Superintendent, of gang-related incidents on the playground or in the classrooms, any way you want to measure it. I mean, could you give us an idea of how much of that activity occurs to the detriment of—

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I don't have that off the top of my head. I have a lot of information.

Mr. HORN. So you can provide it for the record?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. But I will provide that for the record because we do keep those kinds of incidents, also. But we have done a number of things to address the issue of school security and safety in the schools, including of course putting in additional technology so that we can ensure that we have safe environments. We have cameras in almost all of our high schools now. The plan is to put them into—

Mr. HORN. Do you have the type of thing we go through at airports which would detect—

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We do. We have the new metal detectors, similar to what we have in our airports.

Mr. HORN. So that's controlled, where people enter through one gate?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Right.

Mr. HORN. Let me ask you about the clothes situation. Often gang colors show up and that creates problems and all the rest. Has any thought been given to a school uniform?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Many of our elementary schools and about half of our middle schools do have a uniform policy, and we are encour-

aging that. I'd like to see every school, if you really want to know the truth, implement a school uniform policy. As a former principal, I do know that that does help the climate. It helps keep the attention from what people are wearing, to focus on what's happening in the classroom and the teaching and learning.

Mr. HORN. You're absolutely correct because, you know, if we could keep people from—young people from the peer pressures of having to get the Nike shoes that the Jones and the Smiths have—30 years ago, if somebody would be for a school uniform, I'd say they're crazy, but given the times we live in, I think it's just prudence. President Clinton came out to the Long Beach Unified School District, met with people, was suitably impressed with it, and he said in his remarks that Mrs. Clinton had been telling him to do that for 20 years, even when he was Governor, and it has worked, and we don't have that kind of incident occurring over gang colors, if you will, and so I would hope that you would be pursuing it.

Let me ask you, what's the teacher/student ratio in kindergarten and first grade?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. 20 to 1 with an aide.

Mr. HORN. And I bet that's made a lot of difference.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. It has. In addition to the focus on standards, 20 to 1 or lower class size without teachers who teach differently without a curriculum standards who get us increased student achievement, but I think it's a combination of having the lower class sizes, as well as a really clearly articulated curriculum and standards in place that's helping.

Mr. HORN. Now, it's your plan to move up the scale and what—where does it go higher than 20?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. It's the highest at the—believe or it not, it's the highest at the intermediate grades. We're looking at—I see that in our local school plans with the new weighted student formula, many of the schools are lowering their class sizes, either—not necessarily with the teacher but with another adult so that the class sizes will, will see them lower probably next year by choice. The schools, remembering the weighted student formula, firmly get a chance now to decide if they want it lower than the District average.

Right now it's about 25, I believe, to 1, to 26 at the intermediate level. I really believe that at that level they still need smaller class sizes. It's really why I think our summer school program worked very well. The class sizes were down to 15 to 1.

Mr. HORN. Let me ask you, is there any parent involvement in the selection of principals?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Yes. We start with—in fact, in the last year we have put in place a process for how we hire principals and teachers and it's consistent—

Mr. HORN. I'm going to have to move because I see that yellow light facing me, but I've got one last question for you, and that is, to what degree is the educational system coordinating its efforts with the recreation system and the healthcare system in terms of the school grounds? What's bothered me for 40 years at least is the schools are sort of closed down at 3 o'clock, and we ought to have them as community centers where both parents and the pupils

could get their appropriate shots or whatever it is that the health department's going to provide to keep people healthy, and I just—it seems to me with all those facilities it's a great place to also have recreation programs and keep people, young people, occupied. What's your reaction?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I really do agree with you there in that it's really important that we integrate those services and provide wrap-around services for our young people, and that means that we have to then work with our other agencies. I know that Councilmember Chavous is working with us with that, and I want to say, though, last summer, that's one of the things that we did in planning our summer school program is we brought everybody to the table, and so we had the academic programs in the morning and the extended opportunities for them to work with our recreational programs in the afternoon, but our recreational staff were at the table. They all were there with us as we planned the program, and we're doing that again this year. I'd like to see that extended throughout the school year. It's important that we align our resources that way.

Mr. HORN. Well, thank you very much, and I wish you well.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I do want you to know that I did take a visit to Long Beach, and I was very, very impressed with the programs that were there.

Mr. HORN. Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you, Mr. Horn, and I now recognize the gentlelady from Illinois, Mrs. Biggert.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I was thinking back to the Chicago school reform when you mentioned that the schools opened on time because of the start of the Chicago school reform. That was the first time in years that the schools opened on time, that there wasn't a strike and they didn't come to the legislature to ask for more money. So I think that is the first clue that a school system is on the right track. Of course, we did put in some collective bargaining barriers for a certain period of time to ensure that everyone would be there.

But one thing that hasn't been mentioned too much, and I think is so important to a school community, and that is the involvement of the community in the businesses and the parents and the teachers and the school boards. Has there been any change in trying to bring in the parent involvement to a greater degree?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We have tried to do multiple strategies with parent involvement, and for me, I really do believe, again, as a former principal and teacher, that authentic parent involvement happens at the local school site. That's where you want parents involved. That's where—their investment lies in those schools. The weighted student formula was one of the ways this year that heard parents who had been involved in that process, if they weren't on the local school team, and we had parents actually developing the academic plans. They were involved in the community hearings and the community meetings that were held, both at the beginning of the process at the end, and I think that's one way.

We have also put in place a parent affairs office. We've trained 50 parents to go out and to work with other parents. We're training another 50 so we'll have 100, a cadre of 100 parents, that will be training over the summer and working with parents.

I think that we know the importance of having parents involved. I think we tried to do a lot about getting information out to parents about what we're doing, the standards, and for instance, we'll be on the webpage and we'll get distributed to parents next year.

We still again have a long way to do this goal because often parents feel intimidated about schools, so we're trying to change it from parent involvement to parent outreach so that the schools are outreached.

Mrs. BIGGERT. We went back to such basics as that they had to come to the school to pick up a report card.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We did that, too. We also this last year made it very basic that parents and students had to come pick up their school schedules. We also put in place this year new hours for parent/teacher conferences, and we saw a significant increase in the number of parents who participated just by changing the hours from 12 to 7.

Mrs. BIGGERT. What about the dropout rate, has that changed?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. One of the things that I discovered upon my arrival is the lack of the data systems that were in place. I think we have faulty data around the dropout rates. So this is really the first year that we have a clear methodology for tracking attendance, at the high school levels in particular, so we can really look at dropout rates. We're also looking at now the data from the class that is graduating this year and tracking it back to the ninth grade, but the data systems weren't in place. So when I asked simple questions like what's the dropout rate, I got different answers. I think you will see that we will have that information after this year.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Is that involvement too where you've got enforcement of your enrollment eligibility and residency verification?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I think all of that. Now that we have a methodology in place to really accurately count and track our students, we'll know which students started and which students are not there, which students were not supposed to be there, and we'll have accurate numbers, but a lot of what we're doing and have been doing over the last year and a half really has been putting in place those data management systems that weren't there.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Are students able to go from school to school then?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. They have open enrollment.

Mrs. BIGGERT. And is a public charter school, is that what that is, or are they relieved from all of the legislation or the rules and regulations of a regular school?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. They have some different—

Mrs. BIGGERT. I just wondered if it was more of a school that might focus on math, like a magnet school, that students would go there because they were—that was their interest.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. They generally have a theme. The public charter schools have a theme.

Mrs. BIGGERT. Thank you very much.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Thank you. I also want you to know we went to Chicago and some of the things that we put in place, I don't see any reason we need to reinvent the wheel when there are good things going on in public schools across the country.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you. I'll just ask a few questions. I'm going to ask a series of questions on special education, because I think you candidly admitted that there's some shortcomings there that we need some improvement in that area. What's being done—what are you trying to do to produce tangible results there?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. In terms of what are some of the new things we're trying to do, what we really worked on in the last few months, we had on loan from Montgomery County, we did—a special assistant who has really worked very hard to put in place a whole compliance structure for listening—for putting in place and making sure that our hearings get heard in a timely way.

The things that we're doing now is really looking at how to put in place the assessment process at the school site, as well as the IEP development. It hasn't—for some reason it certainly is not a policy, I found out. It's been a practice that the—we call them Form 6s, but it really is the method that triggers the process, gets sent from the school to the central office, and there's a central office team, and there are a variety of teams—assessment teams. We've now put that back into the school site because that's where it happens in school districts across the country. I've never been in a place where the assessments didn't happen at the school.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, getting ahold of special education will have ramifications throughout the system, and I just ask that, what's the current cost of special education in dollars as a percent?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. It's about \$170 million.

Mr. DAVIS. What percent would that be then?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. It's more than a quarter of our budget, about 30 percent.

Mr. DAVIS. How much of that would you say is obligated to out-of-school placements?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We anticipate about \$40 million.

Mr. DAVIS. And how about attorney's fees?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Last year was around \$7 to \$8 million, more than \$7, less than \$8.

Mr. DAVIS. Now, last year as you know, at the request of the school system, legislative language was adopted which extended the timeframe for evaluation and placement of students requiring special education services from 50 to 120 days. Has this change substantially reduced the backlog?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We had a backlog of about 184, and today we anticipate that that backlog will be diminished because it's now in the schools. We've put quotas on this, and I don't anticipate that this will be a problem in the future because we've changed the way we are monitoring the assessments. In addition, we have now put quotas to end the backlog of assessment by the midsummer. So we will see that disappear, too.

Mr. DAVIS. Now, do you think the capacity exists to deal with special needs students within the school system itself or do you think you're going to be substantially sending these kids out?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I think that we—what you will see next year is a real effort to develop programs and to have programs put in place at the different school sites, and we are aggressively moving forward with that for next year. So I think that you will see again, over time, that number diminish as we put in place a way to mon-



itor, even doing the annual evaluations to see if we have programs in the school district, you will see that we will have alternatives for parents. Right now, we don't have the programs in place. We've got to put the programs in place, and there are several that will be in place by September.

I was just given a correction, the attorney fees last year were \$12 million.

Mr. DAVIS. OK. With regard to the capping of attorney's fees related to special education cases, what's been the effect of that legislation? What's been the impact in addressing the backlog?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I know it's lower than it was last year but I can get the specifics for you and send them to you.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, let me say—tell you why it's important is they've been up here.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I know.

Mr. DAVIS. And there's a lot of pressure put on Members—it's a very, very influential group with some Members of Congress, and they've made a case to a lot of our Members who want me to specifically ask you, if you're not saving appreciable money on this by putting the cap on, then why do it and not let the——

Mrs. ACKERMAN. OK. We will be able to give you those numbers. [The information referred to follows:]



**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA  
PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

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September 30, 1999

The Honorable Tom Davis, Chairman  
Subcommittee on the District of Columbia  
Committee on Government Reform  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Davis:

I am writing to report to you on the budgetary and programmatic impact of the cap on special education attorneys' fees that was included in the Fiscal Year 1999 Appropriations Act for the District of Columbia.

The limitation on attorneys' fees has been extremely helpful to our efforts to reform special education in the District of Columbia. Under the cap, DCPS has spent approximately \$2 million on attorneys' fees so far this fiscal year. In FY98, before the cap was instituted, we spent approximately \$14 million on attorneys' fees. With the savings generated as a result of the cap, we have been able to provide improved services to children with special needs. Specifically, under the leadership of a new Director of Special Education, we have established new early childhood programs in twenty elementary schools across the city for very young children with special needs, as well as new behavior management programs in ten elementary schools and two middle schools, and a transition program for children with intensive social and emotional needs at the formerly closed Taft School. In addition, we have placed a new emphasis on the inclusion model, through which disabled students are "mainstreamed" in classrooms with their non-disabled peers whenever possible, system-wide. School principals and teachers received training on the inclusion model this summer.

As you may know, the District has had a backlog of hearing requests for some time. In fact, a class action suit was filed against the school system as a result of the backlog. This summer, we made a major effort to reduce the backlog, bringing in outside counsel and hiring additional staff attorneys to resolve these cases. As a result, the backlog of hearings has been reduced from almost 900 in July to just 293 at the end of August, many of which had not been resolved because plaintiff's counsel requested additional time. We are in settlement negotiations with the class attorneys and hope to reach a final settlement agreement with them soon.

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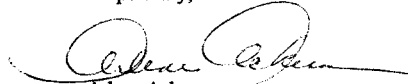
*Children First*

Letter to Chairman Davis  
September 30, 1999  
Page Two

I am aware that opponents of the provision capping attorney's fees argue that it will limit access to legal representation for children with special needs. Although our data for the first six months of the fiscal year did not support this assertion, the number of hearing requests we have received since April has in fact declined. However, the number of hearing requests filed in the District in FY99 (totaling over 1,100) is still more than three times the number of requests for hearings or mediation filed in nearby Montgomery County, Maryland, a district that enrolls almost twice as many students as we do. In addition, because we have dramatically improved our rates of assessment and placement of students with special needs, substantially fewer students have grounds to request hearings to address this once-common procedural violation. Finally, with the help of special education staff from the Montgomery County School District, we implemented our own mediation program this spring, through which 67 cases have been resolved that otherwise would have been the subject of hearings.

As you can see, we are committed to improving special education in the District of Columbia. Although we have a long way to go before we meet our goals in this area, I truly believe that we are on the right track. Your assistance has been invaluable to our effort. I look forward to continuing to work with you to make DCPS' special education program the exemplary program it should be and I will keep you posted on our progress in that direction.

Respectfully,



Arlene Ackerman  
Superintendent

AA/kb

Mr. DAVIS. OK. Has the school system contracted with outside firms that represent the DCPS in the special needs administrative process?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I'm sorry?

Mr. DAVIS. Has the school system contracted with outside firms that represent the public schools in this special needs administrative process? In other words, are you handling these administratively within the system or are you contracting some of that out?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We do some of both. We have contracted some services out.

Mr. DAVIS. OK. I mean, there's nothing wrong with that. I think, when you come into a system that's completely broken down, you do what you have to do.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Yes.

Mr. DAVIS. And this was a mess, and just getting it stabilized, it doesn't happen overnight, and we tried it at the congressional level to help you with some things.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. And it has helped, it really has, and I want to, at the end of this year, show you how it has helped and where you will see the differences.

Mr. DAVIS. Well, it's important we see that, and I'll tell you, in the appropriation process, I suspect there will be a run on the attorney's fees and the sooner you can get information up here to make your case, I think the better off you're going to be.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I was just passed a note. We're now at about \$2 million, \$2½ million. This time last year was at 7, so—

Mr. DAVIS. In attorney's fees?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Uh-huh.

Mr. DAVIS. You're paying out. OK.

Thank you. Let me yield now to my ranking member, Ms. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman. I have a question for Ms. Newman, but before, just to followup on the chairman's questions on special education, actually, as a way to get into whether or not you have been able to deal with the management problems of the school system under the present managers.

Now, the report is that clearly you brought in somebody from Montgomery County—you had in place a way you wanted this matter dealt with. But in point of fact, you had to put three administrators, or three managers I suppose, on administrative leave and you did so. I commend you, where instead of hemming and hawing when people haven't met, as was reported in the newspapers. We can understand how troubled this area was but no one said, I have to take real action. I mean the basics were reported at least in the paper. They go to data correction, how money is being spent, and you brought in a 90-day action plan.

I really wonder if you can really manage the school system from the top that way, and my question is whether this indicates that you have weak managers underneath you throughout the school system, whether you wait until somebody does what apparently the managers did here, which is fail utterly. You just had to give them an F. Is there not a more proactive way to, in fact, get a competent band of managers who from the get-go who will set out to meet your goals and here, of course, it was very serious. It was the most

broken part of the school system and the most disadvantaged children in the school system, but are we in for a kind of management failure, department by department, despite your own very focused approach or do you have a plan to recruit managers who are able and competent enough to, in fact, carry out your own goals and plans?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. That is a good question. It's a difficult question for me to try and answer. It is—I said it's been troubling. It has been. In addition to looking at areas where people—the competency levels, I find that I'm trying to break through a culture of behaviors, lack of accountability, secrets that people know that I had to find out, and so it's important that I believe that I take action. We do have a 90-day plan that's in place. Over the next—within the next 30 days you will hear a reorganization, not even a reorganization, probably a dismantling of the program as we know it, with some movement of managers who are currently in place as we try to put in place a structure that really does support the schools, as opposed to a central office, bureaucratic kind of central office structure.

Special ed is, you know, in many areas I have found this culture of things that are there that I have not seen in any other place, behaviors that have been there, sort of practices that have been ignored or people turn their heads, and one by one I've had to tackle them, and the way to tackle them is to say, this is not acceptable and then to start over again.

I believe that in the next 90-day plan you will see the starting over again with special ed. Now, that will put us in some other—there will be some other rippling effects from that, but I think we can handle that as we've done with personnel—

Ms. NORTON. What do you mean by rippling effect?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Well, when you're making those kind of drastic changes you have to have an infrastructure there to support it. So, as you pull one way, another one has to be in place, and it may not be as strong for a while because you're putting new people there. So I think that unfortunately it will take sort of day-to-day oversight for me until it's there and I can move out and we have at least somebody there in the directorship that can handle this.

Ms. NORTON. Are you evaluating your managers the way the Mayor, for example, has said he's going to put performance goals on his managers and evaluate them so that people know up front that they have to produce?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Which is why—

Ms. NORTON. Management in place in the school system among managers?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. It is and I focused initially on principals and other central office staff. You will see now the focus squarely on special ed, and you will see changes in the management structure within the next 30 or so days. By the end of May you will see major changes.

Ms. NORTON. Let me commend Ms. Newman and the Control Board and Ms. Cooper and the Board of Trustees for their work in trying to move toward a transition back to the elected school board, and of course, the Control Board has a transition plan and is trying to structure that in a very responsible way because, of course, if

the public sees any reversion to type, that that would mean that all of the good work that's been done would be lost.

There was some initial concern that the short and long term, that there were short- and long-term goals but that the first goal of developing a mission statement had not been met on time. Can you tell us anything about whether that goal has been met at this time and whether other goals are being met on time and how the process of meeting the goals necessary for transition are proceeding?

Ms. NEWMAN. Well, I'd like to start by saying I am now optimistic that we're going to be able to work through the transition with the elected school board and the emergency trustees.

What did happen was that there were two full day retreats with the elected school board where they started working through the transition plan. They had to become comfortable with it. They also asked for two facilitators so they could respond to talks about cultural change. That's what we're also having to do with regard to the elected school board, and they felt that it was necessary to spend some time with facilitators, getting to learn how to work with one another.

So that was more important frankly than at the outset meeting the date for having the vision and mission statement. The vision and mission statement was discussed at the 24th retreat, but that isn't going to have any meaning until they sit down with the superintendent. What we have said to them is that there's certain dates that are a must to be met. October 1, 1999 is the beginning date of the work on the fiscal 2001 budget, and they are to take the lead in that. They cannot move on that date.

So they have now backed up from that date a schedule that we will approve this week. They did not change too many of the steps in between the development of the mission and vision statement, a strategic plan with long- and short-term goals. They need to work on their by-laws, but importantly, and this is going to be tough, they and the superintendent are going to have to work out a clear understanding of roles and responsibilities, and when I say that, I mean it's going to be tough because one person believes that they're micromanaging and another person believes they're not micromanaging but they're just carrying out their responsibilities and addressing policy issues.

Now, some of these areas are pretty clear, and I think we're going to have to put some of those on the table and just say there's no debate here, this is policy, and you are in operations, but I guess I would just conclude by saying there will be an approved plan that alters the dates. The dates won't be changed that much, but I think we all agree, those of us who have spent a great deal of time with the school board and the facilitators, that it was more important at the outset to develop a way in which the school board worked with itself, with its leadership and with the superintendent, and if that didn't happen, all of the other goals on the transition plan would not be met in a meaningful way.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you.

Mr. HORN. Let me pursue that question just a little bit in terms of the management. Do you have exceptions for management from

being in collective bargaining or is there a separate union for managers? How does it work?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We do have a teachers' union, and we have an officers' bargaining unit for managers, yes.

Mr. HORN. Now, that would include the principals of the various schools?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. That's right and some of our central office staff are in this bargaining unit.

Mr. HORN. What are the positions that are not in the bargaining unit, assistant superintendents?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Assistant superintendents are not there. The——

Mr. HORN. Consultants?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Right, but most of the central office managerial positions are in this bargaining unit.

Mr. HORN. I think Ms. Norton made a very pertinent point here, if you're going to get a real reaction of your managers, you need contracts of 6 months or a year. We did that in the California State University system, took me about 5 years of lobbying the trustees to get it, and we had a lot of help obviously of presidents, chancellors, so forth, but it turned things around. We got rid of the civil service positions for management. We had four overlapping categories. It started at \$10,000 and went to \$100,000 in terms of deans, vice-presidents, so forth. This is 10 years ago, and you just saw the change, and this was incentives, and as I look around the world, there are two countries that have done the same thing, and that's Australia and New Zealand, where people are held to those contracts and the recompense of the benefits and stipend for salary and so forth is adjusted based on performance. If they don't have the performance, they're out or are you stuck with tenure situations on assistant superintendents and everybody?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. No, we're not.

Mr. HORN. They're pleasure appointed?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. That's right.

Mr. HORN. Cause the only way you as superintendent are going to be able to turn anything around is if you have that authority. So do you feel you have enough or should it be broadened into the management groups?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I think that given—I think we have enough to make the changes that we need, and there are strategies, as you will see. I'm trying not to announce what we're going to do here because I'm trying not to compromise the work that's already under way, but I think we will be able to do what we need to do in special ed in terms of the restructuring of it and get some changes, and then we have put in place performance measures at every level, and we will put them there.

Just the mere putting in, in the last few weeks, the quota system of how many assessments have to be done and holding people accountable to it, we've shown—we already are beginning to see the results of that. We've reduced the 184 now down to 20.

Mr. HORN. Let me pursue another question here or do you have a point, Ms. Cooper?

Mrs. COOPER. I'm sorry, Congressman. Ms. Norton, I was trying to wait for Congressman Davis to return. I did get a commitment

that I could leave at 11:30, and I'm already late. If there are some other questions, please feel free to ask. I'd like to be excused.

Mr. HORN. Let me ask one more and then Ms. Norton will be again asking questions. This question comes up because of what we went through in the last Congress where computer firms all over the Nation wanted us to change the immigration laws to bring foreign programmers to the United States. Now, they do a fine job, a lot of these foreign programmers. However, there's a golden opportunity for minority students in particular, and I hit the ceiling when I saw this, and I talked to our community college presidents, a number of them, and some of the Silicon Valley types.

Now, Fairfax County is sort of Silicon Valley East, and it seems to me that the schools ought to be working very closely with the people that are putting out both the hardware and the software. Those jobs are \$60,000 a year jobs on the average to be programmers, and those would be great opportunities for students from the District of Columbia schools, but if it's going to work, it means there has to be a track in both elementary school, junior high, high school, community college and the 4-year institutions, and I would hope that frankly the school system would do that and sit down with the people in Fairfax County, and the chairman here obviously knows them all, that he could lead you in the right direction but—

Mr. DAVIS. Will the gentleman yield? I mean, we've offered—it's—you know, we've certainly offered to do that many times with the city and for various reasons. I mean, there are a lot of our people trying to get involved there, but there's still a little disconnect, and hopefully we can improve on that.

Mr. HORN. It's something. If you tell them where the goals are at the end of the line I think a lot of students would be encouraged and want to pursue those goals.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I would like to send you.

Mr. DAVIS. If the gentleman will yield for a second, I'll let you respond. We have 12,000 minimum jobs right now that we can't fill that average in the \$45, \$50,000 range, and because the public sector has so missed this, we have private schools, computer learning centers, Strayer College, groups like that that are coming up and filling the need that government has missed the marketplace all together. It is sad and we've tried to connect with the city.

So I think they're trying in their own way to do this, but they look at economics differently, and so on, than we do in the suburbs, and I think through a dialog this can—over time they will wake up and see some of the opportunities, but I appreciate the gentleman's comments.

Mr. HORN. Well, all I can say is, if they're serious about it in this country, then educators ought to be doing this, and if they aren't they're failing as educators. That's how I feel about it.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. And I do agree with you. This issue of technology in particular is a major issue, and I guess one of the things I would like to share with you and send to you is some of the things we have done just in the last year around technology, which includes a collaborative grant that we did recently submit with Fairfax County School District, and I was really pleased when the superintendent called me and asked would we be interested in col-



laborating with them, and we did. So we will send you information on that because we're looking forward to getting this grant.

Mr. HORN. Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you.

Ms. NORTON. Would you yield on the question you just raised?

Mr. DAVIS. Sure.

Ms. NORTON. Apart from the jobs that are available, and this is something that's discussed over and over again, we wired the schools, and I understand every school is now wired.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Every school is wired.

Ms. NORTON. I've not heard whether or not our schools, the teachers in our schools are prepared to, in fact, handle these computers and this technology. It does seem to me that one way in which Fairfax County or anyone whom the chairman might designate could be helpful would be in quickly getting teachers so that they are not sitting in schools with computers they don't know how to use and, therefore, can't do anything for the children with. I'd like to ask you first whether or not teachers have had any training now that the schools are wired, and second, whether or not there's anything you think that the region could do if the teachers do need any special training?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Well, this whole issue of technology, I do believe that if our children are going to be prepared for the 21st century, they have to be technologically competent, and the way that really happens in a sustained way is with teachers who understand it. We've had more than 5,000 of our teachers and support staff who have gone through some kind of training this last year. We put in place for the first time instructional technology department. It wasn't even existent when I came and it's in place now. We have now over six different partnerships with area firms and companies, again to shore up our focus on this initiative.

And then the last thing I'd like to say is we just recently opened a new training facility down on 8th Street, in our 8th Street building where we have 80 computer—it's called the Cable in the Classroom training facilities. So we plan and have major plans to have professional development over the next year that will increase the contact that we have with teachers to make sure that they're ready to fully integrate technology into the classrooms.

So we did see this coming. Once the schools were wired, now you got to work on the staff. Sometimes—we even have some plans of helping our students help, some be facilitators for teachers. Some of the students have had the experiences and teachers haven't, so—

Mr. DAVIS. Maudine, if you want to add anything, you can. Otherwise you're certainly excused.

Mrs. COOPER. I just want to mention once again that we do have the alliance that includes many members from the surrounding communities. One of those representatives is Marie Johns, who is chairing that regional technology group. So there is a definite connection between what the superintendent is trying to do and the business community, public, private kind of partnership.

I do have to go and I apologize, but I just want to say thank you and Ms. Norton for your support of the college access program. As

a member of the board and the executive committee, I think that we all in that committee and board do appreciate your support.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much. I've got my 5 minutes and I'm going to start talking. Technology came up and I was a technology executive before I came to Capitol Hill. I had some pretty strong feelings about it, and I don't want to place this burden on the school system because, frankly, that's not been the problem.

There are issues there where we can do a better job, and you have a great challenge ahead and unlimited opportunity for these kids that choose to go in that direction, and the College Access Act, which I sponsored, is part of that because it will make affordable educational opportunities, but more importantly, it will allow the city to focus UDC into areas where it can be a job creator and teach, if that's what the city chooses to do.

But it's tough to do anything in this city because in my opinion it gets—instead of looking at the grand picture and looking ahead and around corners, it tends to be very parochially oriented sometimes in the way decisions are made, and Mrs. Ackerman, I don't consider you part of that problem, but I think that has been the history, and we're trying to break out of that mold.

Let me ask, I'm going to go back to something Mr. Chavous and I talked about earlier in terms of we'd seen improvement in safety in the school system, and I just had an opportunity to call the company who has been doing that, and they were indicating they'd been asking for meetings to find out what they did wrong and haven't been able to reach your office or Mrs. Ackerman's, and I would hope that—they are a Fairfax County business—that there is some feeling that they were picked out because they weren't a DC business.

And this would go back to the parochialism that has driven so many decisions in this city, and I hope this is not part of what has motivated you in this because I think that's a throwback at a time when the city and suburbs are reaching out to meet with each other, but there has been some rhetoric throwing around about, you know, suburbanites.

Listen, our destinies are intertwined, and we have talent out there that would love to start taking DC kids and educating them, bringing them out to work in our companies and, more importantly, some of our companies opening up offices in the city, if you can make it affordable for them to do that, and cut the regulation and so on that has deterred and driven many of them to the suburbs.

That's part of the problem, and I just hope that has not been a motivation, and since I've got you here under oath, I thought it's a great time to talk about it.

Mr. CHAVOUS. And since you do have me under oath, let me assure you, you don't need to go there. That wasn't the motivation at all.

Look, in all candor, I wasn't thinking specifically about that company when I made that suggestion moot. I was thinking in terms of the big picture, as you suggested the city should do. You know, Mrs. Ackerman made a good point earlier when she talked about—

Mr. DAVIS. I'm going to let you finish, but let me just say this, we heard Mrs. Cooper earlier talk about limiting the school's abil-

ity to make—to do their own decisions. We've had this problem in Fairfax where—and I don't mean to say Fairfax is the end all to do things—where we would have the school system do one thing and the county do others through the police and everything else. To the extent you have the police moving in, they really report to you and the Mayor, not to the school system.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, let me say this, a couple of things, the contract was going to end in October, irrespective of what we did. As part of the—

Mr. DAVIS. That had an option, though, to be—

Mr. CHAVOUS. Yeah, but I had nothing to do with the decision on the contract. In fact, Chief Ramsey, if he chooses, can choose to renew the contract. That has nothing to do with the move we made. What we're looking at is an approach to security consistent with what other urban school districts are doing around the country, same in Baltimore, New York, and we look at these best practices, and looking toward the future, that's what led to the decision. It has nothing to do with parochialism. It has to do with long range vision and planning, which is something that you-all have suggested we do for many years, and I've said to Chief Ramsey, he should work with Mrs. Ackerman, work with the local schools and make a decision about what is in the best interest for those individual schools as it relates to security. So it has nothing to do with going out to—

Mr. DAVIS. And that's all I want you to do. That's all I would want you to do on that is to do what you think is the right thing, but I was in the business for a long time, too, with contractors. You ought to bring them in and let them know what's going on.

Mr. CHAVOUS. I told them we'd talk with them. I mean, we were asked—I don't know if they're on the schedule or not.

Mr. DAVIS. Let me move on to a couple of other items.

Ms. NORTON. Could the gentleman just yield on this question?

Mr. DAVIS. Sure.

Ms. NORTON. Because there was something that interested me as well, without taking from your time, and take from mine if necessary.

I think that it will restore confidence in security in the public schools that the Metropolitan Police Department has control of these safety issues, given the problems that you've had with contracts and with what we know about people who are sometimes recruited.

There's a lot of confidence in the police chief, and it is true that given the mounting problems of safety in public schools, big city school systems have been moving in the direction that Councilmember Chavous indicated.

My only concern would be, since essentially you've got to have a cop for example, you had them in the high schools—whether or not you're going to be able to do it at the appropriate cost, because one of the reasons people have gotten these contractors is they hire these \$8 an hour folks who have very little experience, who have not done a good job in our school system, I can tell you that for sure, on safety matters, and I can understand why they hire them. You know, they hire essentially security guards in big city school systems where people are bringing in real ammunition. Parents, es-

pecially after Littleton, CO, want to make sure that there's somebody at the door who has had some real training.

My concern, Councilmember Chavous, would be, whether or not the police chief might indeed, instead of using high cost cops, be able to recruit people who might be in a more—I'll use the word paraprofessional role—but still not cost us what it would cost us to have essentially officers doing the work that these contract officers now do. Is there any look at the cost effect of the changes you were making?

Mr. CHAVOUS. I think that's an excellent point. In fact, when this suggestion was vetted to the chief, I mean, he didn't immediately say yes, I want to do it. I mean, I think he did some due diligence on his own, as did Mrs. Ackerman, in talking to some of the other jurisdictions that have headed in this direction, and he thinks he can do it, particularly with the money that's available, and he did not rule out maintaining a relationship with the current security company but having it augmented with the better increased role of the metropolitan police department.

The other thing that we're going to do is we're going to have a hearing in June, and Mrs. Ackerman and the chief and I are all going to sit down to figure out the best way to make it work. I mean, I can't emphasize enough that this action was not aimed at the contractor per se. It was really aimed at trying to move the system forward and taking as much off of this great superintendent's plate as possible. I mean, I think that her focus should be on educational reform. It shouldn't be dealing with the security contract.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Chavous, under that then, you wouldn't give them back any procurement. You would keep procurement over on the city side, and we just heard Mrs. Cooper say she wanted it to go back to schools.

Mr. CHAVOUS. Well, we haven't done that. I mean, that's something—we're trying to work out a balance because we don't want to put additional burdens on her. I think—

Mr. DAVIS. We just want it to work. We just want things to work.

We heard testimony today that things are going in the right direction on security, and now you are doing another—I don't care what you do. We are going to hold you accountable. We think this is, obviously, with the events in Colorado, this is even heightened. But the school system has been going in the right direction in the last year, and now you want to go in another direction. That's fine. You may be able to improve it and enhance it.

I just want to say to you, the cost—we don't want to do this on the cheap. Having a secure school system is the most important thing that you can do as kind of an anchor before you can get to the other items. The surveys that I saw in terms of why kids were dropping out was the safety and concern about being safe in schools was one of the reasons that kids were dropping out. That is an absolutely critical route to go.

If you have given it the thought and the reflection and we have an unanimity among us on the way to go, that's all right. That's fine with me. I just want to make sure that this wasn't driven by other things which I see so often in this city. That's all I'm saying. I think that I have said enough on it. We are going to be watching and holding you accountable appropriately.

Mr. CHAVOUS. I appreciate that.

Mr. DAVIS. Just a couple of other things that I wanted to bring out. We have an elected school board now that was, frankly, dysfunctional for a couple of years. That's why we had an advisory school board put up and everything. But now that they have been elected, are there plans—and this is really addressed to you, Ms. Newman—to start phasing them back in? They were the first elected group in the city. Are there plans to phase them back into involvement with the public school system and how is that being implemented?

Ms. NEWMAN. Yes. We have a fairly detailed plan that was put together under the leadership of the dean of the School of Education at G.W., Mary Futrell. There were representatives appointed by Council Member Chavous, and the elected school board and the appointed school board.

That plan outlines what needs to be put into place to develop the leadership capability. That plan puts into place a time line for developing a mission and vision statement, and bylaws—especially, the relationship between the superintendent and the school board and their roles and responsibilities. And in the plan there is along the way before June 30, 2000, additional responsibilities. At the outset we turned over the lead responsibility on discipline and development of the facilities' master plan. That development of the facilities' master plan would be done in conjunction with the superintendent and the Corps of Engineers.

The school board has started working on that. They have a staff person assigned to them, and they will meet the deadline on that, I'm assured of that. But the ultimate goal is to be certain that by June 30, 2000, they have the tools to do the job, but more importantly, the understanding of what the job is and an agreement with the superintendent of the distinction between policy development and day-to-day operations.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you.

Ms. NEWMAN. I should add that I'm optimistic that it will work.

Mr. DAVIS. We all want it to work. We really do. We didn't feel good about doing anything that would deprive this, but it gets to a point where we had to step in, and we have some new Members now that are untested, but in many cases weren't part of the problems in the past and we want to make sure that we transition. I think that's where this committee would come from and Ms. Norton would concur with that.

Finally, just on the charter schools. That was briefly discussed as we moved on, the implementation of charter schools as being a part of the overall plan. They present a great opportunity if it's done correctly, and they can always sometimes go the other way as well if it's not done. What is being done? How do the charter schools fit into the strategy?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We certainly provide the support, but it's really sort of a separate process now. The Board of Ed serves as one chartering body, and then there is another body.

Mr. DAVIS. I guess my question is, are we being reactive? If somebody wants to start a charter school and the school board decides that they cut the mustard—or are we saying that here is an area like technology where if we did a charter that would focus on

certain items that would bring in a consortium of technology companies coming in and specializing in this that we could be active and let's go out and recruit that?

Are we still in a reactive mode on this?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I don't know because I'm not involved in either of those processes.

Mr. DAVIS. That's my question.

Mr. CHAVOUS. I can speak a little bit to that. We have had several oversight hearings on what the public charter school board is doing. They have been reviewing a lot of different applications. I can tell you that what a proponent of a charter school has to go through is extremely tedious. It's not easy to start a charter school. They have charter schools set up in terms of technology, hospitality, mathematics. They have all kinds of specialty areas. I think they have become more proactive in terms of the selection process and in terms of the criteria they are utilizing in order to decide who to appoint those charters too.

Mr. DAVIS. But Councilman Chavous, that is the way it works in a lot of places. But to really make this work, you can be proactive. You can say, here is a void that the public schools aren't getting right now due to rules and regulations and other things. You go out and you incentivize certain groups and say, yes, we could really use a charter that would be in one area.

The city has done very well. Not just with charters, but with some of the magnets that it has. I have been very impressed with some of the kids I see coming out of Banneker and coming out of Duke Ellington school for the arts. It worked very, very well. But charters can serve that purpose, too, if they are started appropriately.

We are happy to help you get the consortiums going. There is a lot of interest in this region about helping provide quality education to these kids. Charters are a great way sometimes where you don't have to work within the existing rules to do that. If you are proactive, and this could include some input from Mrs. Ackerman in terms of these are areas where we feel right now that the school system could use some help because we have to deal with everybody in the school system and there are some niches where if we had a charter here we could be proactive, and these are the kinds of things in which we like to help you.

Ms. NEWMAN. I would just add that I have been meeting with the representatives of both of the chartering authorities and meeting with them together to ask the question, What is the rationale and the criteria they are using to address the needs of the overall school system? I think they are thinking about that. At the outset I think their criteria was more along the lines of what is a strong organization that can run a school along certain lines.

If you look at the pattern now, many of them, the math and science strategy for some of the schools says, we know where some of the gaps are and we believe that we can contribute to the overall school system. More of that needs to be done, but I think they are thinking along those lines.

Mr. DAVIS. So the marketplace itself is starting to define it. OK, that's all I needed. Thank you. Mrs. Norton.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. The chairman called an entire hearing on the school count. We are pleased to read recently that the school certainly can count now. You have 75,483 students. But if I may say so, I always thought, particularly under you, Mrs. Ackerman, that you all would learn to count the students. I regard that as an administrative act that somehow you get enough folks in place who have done it before, that that could be figured out. But you have not dealt with my problem. You really have not dealt with my problem according to your own release.

Here I'm reading from the release, your own auditors who conducted and performed the student census, as it is called. Here I am quoting: "identified continuing problems such as the lack of student documentation being maintained by DCPS and the public charter schools to verify residents."

Going on: "The individual charter schools have their own standards for determining residency."

Now, this is from your release. My problem has never been whether there are this many more or that many more. My problem has been where do they come from. As long as we—particularly, now that we cannot do, and for the foreseeable future will do no, commuter tax, the insult to injury it adds for folks who happen to be coming into the District of Columbia to drop off a child in one of our public schools and now a public charter school is really something.

I heard the chairman asking about proactivity in our charter schools. Well, you know, in Virginia and Maryland they can't get charter schools at all. They are virtually blocked there. So what happens? You may have people from Virginia and Maryland seeing this new blossoming charter school movement in the District of Columbia where we have more charter schools per capita than any place. They could be ripping you off because we still have this residency problem. I know that Mrs. Ackerman went to great lengths, great lengths to indicate what residences—what we should use to verify residency and the wide open things like what church do you go to, those kinds of things were eliminated. But if you have got almost 5,000 children in charter schools, and they are determining standards for residency, I, at least, have no confidence that the charter schools are educating D.C. students, and I don't even have confidence that you are because they say, your own auditors say, there is a lack of student documentation being maintained by the D.C. Public Schools to verify residency.

So, I would like to ask you—perhaps Mr. Chavous knows something about this—how you yourself can be confident that you are overseeing this expenditure of D.C. taxpayers' funds only on D.C. taxpayer children in public schools, whether they are public charter schools or schools under your direct control.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. We went through, as you know, an extensive process last fall around verification. The problem that we had when we talked with the auditors is what we kept as a proof of that process. In some schools there was the checklist and signed off by the person, the staff person, who verified. Others, they actually kept the documents. There was some confusion this year about whether or not the documents had to be kept in every file. What we did

have was, though, a verification that they had been checked and what was checked.

What we have done for next year is to be clear about that. That was the problem that we had. When we brought the auditors back, I think they were satisfied that we did, indeed, have a process in place and that we could verify. The problem we had is what we kept in the permanent records. Next year that will not be an issue. As it relates to what happens in charter schools, we did not have that same process for charter schools. There was a separate process.

Ms. NORTON. Why was that, Mrs. Ackerman? That's not in your best interests.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Well, I know——

Ms. NORTON. Public school money per pupil that goes to the charter schools. Why wouldn't you insist that they, in fact, use the same process that you had forced on the public schools that are noncharter schools?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. I would like to insist that they do, but I don't think that I——

Mr. CHAVOUS. And that will happen. We have noticed that has been a problem. With the escalating number of children that are accessing public charter schools, there has to be some continuity in the enrollment and making sure that the residency includes D.C. residents.

In fact, Ms. Newman and I have been talking about the best way to do it. If it needs to be done legislatively, it will be. If it needs to be done in rulemaking, we will make that happen.

Ms. NORTON. I very much appreciate that to clear this problem up once and for all.

Could I ask you a question—by the way, I'm sure that you would be concerned about this, Mr. Chavous. They no longer are saying 80,000 students. So that means 4,000 disappeared just by counting. Now they are saying 75,000.

You know what has happened to 7 and 8. That's where the children were. That's also where much of the movement has gone from. That's why it has been hard for us to believe that somehow the movement out of the city has been so colossal but the school remained exactly where it was. There is some credibility restored because at least the number has gone down so we can see that there is accurate counting.

Let me ask you, in light of that, about this difficult problem that the school system has had. One, I want to know if there is a continuing decline in student population and whether you anticipate that that will be the case. We are gaining in population, but all of the indications are that they are single people and married couples without children. So, one, in your long range planning do you see a decline in the student population, and, two, what has happened to the properties that were to be sold once you closed the school? If there is a decline in student population, do you see any more consolidation or closing of schools?

Mr. CHAVOUS. Let me answer the first one. I think that Mrs. Newman can answer about the surplus properties the Control Board has been tasked with that responsibility.



We are going through this process of implementing a long-range master facilities' plan, and one of the reasons why we rejected the plan last year is it did not deal with the demographic trends. We don't want to talk—we are talking about building and modernizing new schools. We don't want to build schools and modernize schools if there aren't going to be children. So we are doing some statistical analysis to try to decide where the growths are in this city.

It is true that the city is continuing to lose population, but it is also true that that is being stabilized somewhat. It is being offset to some degree, not to the degree that we would like, by new folks coming into the city. My ward, as you mentioned, ward 7, has lost more people in this city than any ward in the city over the past 10 years. But we do see home sales increasing by families even in my ward.

So the short answer to your question is, yes, we think that the school population is still declining, but we don't feel that it's declining at the same time. I think that the renaissance in the city will be reflected in middle class families coming back in. I think that with some of the inroads we are making with public safety and even along the tax lines—I think that's going to have, frankly, a heartening impact on that issue.

I think Ms. Newman could speak specifically about surplus property.

Ms. NEWMAN. Yes, I can, and I can't speak in a way that I'm very proud of. I think that most of us who have been involved with the disposition of the school property up until about 2 months ago have not been that comfortable that the process has run as smoothly as it should run. But what I think we all are in agreement on right now is that we need to see which of the schools are in process and where are there certain expectations that there is property to be disposed of. And then what we need to do is to revisit the policy and determine—what I started to get along the way was more public sentiment that the school system not sell the properties, but rather lease it. That wasn't the policy at the outset.

So what I'm suggesting is that once we see what is in process and we take care of those, up or down, that then we, through the public process of the Council, revisit what is and should be the policy, how much should there be a determination of the community impact and other community uses, and how much should only the bottom line be considered in the disposition of the property.

Ms. NORTON. I can understand your concern and, of course, you are getting competing notions here. One thing that you don't want to have happen to you is what happened to the city in the past. The city has closed schools. These schools have become terrible wrecks in communities. So if you close schools and go through that pain, some disposition must be made of the school.

As you say, there are options. If you don't want to sell it, or you decide on second thought you shouldn't sell it, then the only thing that I'm asking is don't let happen what has happened in my neighborhood where the school site became the focus for all of the dereliction in the neighborhood. It was the public school site.

Whereas people were taking care of their homes, it was the public school site because the public school was closed, the site, years ago and nothing ever happened to it. So the public thinks that hav-

ing gone through this terrible pain and turmoil, which, of course, was necessary to close the schools, that the site is going to be taken care of. I would only ask that a time limit be put on it, for example, to say that by the end of this year a decision would be made on what is the disposition of the closed schools, so that we will not go into the year 2000 not even knowing whether it is going to be sold or whether you have made another decision.

Mr. DAVIS. If the gentleman would yield, I would concur with that. I would concur with that.

Ms. NEWMAN. Mr. Chairman, a point of personal privilege. Mr. Singleton is a member of the elected school board, and I think he feels I haven't properly represented the optimism and the support for the elected school board. I would like to ask him if he can have a minute——

Mr. DAVIS. He isn't sworn. We invited the school board to participate, and their leader did not show or give notice as to why she wasn't showing. We will give him an ample opportunity at another hearing.

Ms. NEWMAN. I see.

Ms. NORTON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have no more questions.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Horn.

Mr. HORN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I think earlier in response to a question from the panel, Superintendent, you mentioned the open enrollment policy of the District.

Do you have data on last fall's results of open enrollment, and has it been analyzed as to where a particular student was and where that student is now going? And is that data available, and have you analyzed it in terms of is this a bad school that student was leaving from to go to what was perceived by parents and perhaps the child as a good school? And what can you tell me about the analysis of that data?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Again, we are in the process. This is the first year that we have put out our school profiles, so we are looking at a variety of data, including where our students attend schools. We will be able to, for the first time, take a look at that as we look at all of the data we have compiled by school.

There is movement across the District—and we can see within each school how many students are out of boundary. So we will be able to look at how many students are out of boundary and continue, how many students migrate back. In the past, we haven't kept that, we haven't looked at that data. We are now compiling it in the new school profiles along with other data that will allow us to look at it and strategically plan, but to allow parents to look at it.

Mr. HORN. That is where I was leading. Have you thought of a random sample of the parents when you see some significant—sort of more than normal change? Either a person might have bought a house in a different type of neighborhood or not, and that—but the question is, if they are still living at a certain address and changing schools, that ought to be perhaps significant, and are you thinking of doing the survey to get more information?

Mrs. ACKERMAN. This is the second year that we surveyed all of our parents, and there are a variety of questions. Many of them re-

late to the school and what is happening in the school. Since this is our second year, we can now begin to compare what parents said last year with the data that we have this year when we get it back. In fact, the surveys are in, probably, in all of our homes this week—or they will be by the end of this week—and we are expecting them back.

We are going to do the comparison. We are going to use it. I am a firm believer that the data needs to drive the decisions in the District. These surveys tell us a lot. They told us a lot last year and they will tell us even more about the progress that we are making in our individual schools. We also surveyed our students and staff.

Mr. HORN. I suspect that you and I could agree that the principal sort of sets the tone for the school and makes the difference. My children went to the D.C. schools when they were desegregated, two-thirds black in the particular junior high that my daughter went to. Superb education. Then the principal retired for many years and the school started going downhill because the successor never left the principal's office. The previous principal was out there in those halls, was tooting his whistle, knew students by name, all of those things that connect in terms of encouraging students to get an education. I hope you will be looking at that and maybe holding some principals accountable.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Last year we changed 39 principals. I do believe that the victory is in the classroom with the teacher, but it is facilitated in the principal's office. If you want to see a good school, there is a good principal in the principal's office.

Mr. HORN. As you know, that also means that the principal ought to be backing up the teacher when there are discipline problems. Too often principals have just been hiding behind the desk. I don't know how you find that as a superintendent, whether they are hiding under the desk or just behind the desk, but I leave that up to your professionalism. Thank you.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Thank you.

Mr. DAVIS. Mr. Horn, thank you. I want to thank all of you. We may submit some further questions. Mrs. Ackerman, I know you are going to get back to us with those test scores that we asked for and we will make those part of the record.

Mrs. ACKERMAN. Yes.

Mr. DAVIS. Without objection, all written statements submitted by the witnesses will be made part of the permanent record, and the record will remain open for 10 days. The subcommittee will continue to work with all interested parties to achieve these objectives of making this a great school system. And these proceedings are closed.

[Whereupon, at 12:23 p.m., the subcommittee was adjourned.]